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VIOLA;

OR,

'TIS AN OLD TALE, AND OFTEN TOLD.

BY

MISS ISABEL GOLDSMID,

AUTHOR OF "SHADOWS AND SUNSHINE."

THIS let me hope, that when in public view
I bring my pictures, men may feel them true:
"This is a likeness," may they all declare,
"And I have seen him, but I know not where."
For I should mourn the mischief I had done,
If, as the likeness, all would fix on one.
No! let the guiltless, if there such be found,
Launch forth the spear, and deal the deadly wound.
How can I so the cause of virtue aid,
Who am myself attainted and afraid?

CRABBE.

What! write in a book,
Where the learned may look,
Which the critic may con at his leisure?

LONDON:

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND CO., FARRINGDON STREET.

1852.

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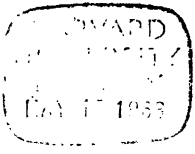

VIOLA,

OR,

'TIS AN OLD TALE, AND OFTEN TOLD.

CHAPTER I.

Earth has one boon for all her children—death :
Open thy arms, O mother ! and receive me !
Take off the bitter burthen from the slave,
Give me my birthright ! give the grave, the grave !

F. A. KEMBLE.

Ah, woe ! alas ! pain ever, for ever !—SHELLEY.

THE sun had not yet risen on our vast metropolis, the gray hues of twilight mingled almost imperceptibly with the deep blue of night, as one by one her starry gems paled before the glimmer of the approaching dawn.

The morning star, last and brightest of heaven's host, still lingered in the firmament as if loth to bid the world farewell.

The leaves of the only tree in a churchyard adjoining our dwelling quivered fitfully in the breeze, whilst a solitary bird chirped its one dreamy note—and was silent.

Man had not yet awoke to his daily toil ; the plough,

the loom, the engine, were at rest, the world itself seemed buried in slumber: it was as though the primal curse had not been fulminated, and repose and inaction, instead of labour and travail, were the inheritance of the sons of Adam. Silence was all around, broken only by the convulsive gasps, the long-drawn sighs of the soul that was struggling to fling off its mortal coil, and bound into the regions of eternal light.

The man of science stood by the bed of death, but he proffered no succour, for he felt that a stronger than he was there, and slowly and sadly he withdrew from the desolate chamber. A minute longer, and I gazed on the face of the dead. I was the chief mourner, —alas! I was the *only* mourner there. I remember but one thing more: I remember the nurse with her puckered, withered face, her slow, stealthy step, and callous demeanour, curtaining o'er those glazed eyes with their stiffening lids, and, as she did so, she bade me, with superstitious awe, touch that inanimate piece of marl "lest I should dream of it." My angel mother! would that I could have dreamed of thee for ever! I think I threw myself upon the corpse, but I remember naught else:—that was a blessed time of oblivion.

* * * * *

I woke—"how happy they who wake no more,"—to the vague, shuddering, twilight recollection, which precedes the full, gushing noonday revelation of misery, that rushes with tenfold bitterness to the heart. Indeed how could I be long forgetful of that last dread scene when the same withered old crone hung over me, and told me in harsh accents to "cheer up," for that a gentleman had been each day to inquire after me,—a friend.

"Heaven help me!" I replied, "I have no friends."

"Ah! that is what every one says at first, Miss; but you'll learn as one friend goes, another rises in his place. We make new friendships for ourselves as the old ones drop off."

This, I thought, is the philosophy of the poor, and this have I now to learn.

"But," resumed the woman, "the gentleman wishes to see you as soon as the doctor gives him leave."

The apothecary came; he was happy, he said, to find me so resigned. Alas! mine was the resignation of despair; that deadliest and most stagnant calm, that torpor of the soul, when foul and noxious weeds oft take firm root in the desolate waste, but where never blooms the "immortal amaranth," or flower of paradise.

In less than a week, I was allowed to see my unknown visitant. Punctual to the time and hour appointed, he came. There was an emphatic knock at the street-door, a card was presented to me, and, in another minute, Mr. Charles Sidney stood before me. He was a cousin of my mother, second cousin to me,—*my nearest surviving relation.* I had seen him at rare intervals, when he came to transfer a little stock for us, or to instruct my mother in that only veritable alchymy by which a few shillings are eked out to produce the value of as many guineas. He now dragged forth a chair, took out his silk pocket-handkerchief, and sedulously wiped from the worn-out cushion sundry particles of dust that told a tale of neglected housewifery. He then seated himself, and after balancing the chair to and fro for a few seconds, commenced as follows:—

"This is a sad affliction, cousin Dorothy." I bowed my head, for I could not answer. "However," he continued, in the same dry, measured tone, "it was in the course of nature; we must all go, sooner or later. You have nothing to reproach yourself with; you have fulfilled your duty, Dorothy, and the remembrance that you have done so, must be a vast comfort to you now; but, bless me! how poor she has died! I had no idea it had come to that pass. How very absurd it was thus to conceal her circumstances from

me. Your mother was a good woman, but she had a deal of foolish pride. She ought never to have sunk that last five hundred."

I shuddered, I felt myself turn deadly pale; for I knew full well the bitter struggle she had endured, the daily increasing poverty that menaced us, the lingering hope with which she had endeavoured to stave off the evil day; and I thought of her vain, vain sorrow, the tears she had shed, the anguish with which she would exclaim, "What will become of you, Dorothy, when I am gone?" and now to hear her blamed! My cousin saw the agony depicted on my countenance, but he mistook its cause, and said in a softened tone: "Nay Dorothy, don't be uneasy; you shall not starve: yet tell me, my dear, what can you do? I fear you are not fit for a governess; can you play the piano?"

"A little, a very little,—I am out of practice; it is long since we have had an instrument."

"Ah, it won't do, I fear. You can parley-vous it, I suppose?"

"I understand French well," I replied, "but I do not speak it fluently."

My cousin Charles looked puzzled, he shifted his spectacles, wiped them thoughtfully, and rubbed his brow as though seeking for inspiration; he was driven to a nonplus, stranded, wrecked; at length he said, "Well, cousin Dorothy, what *is* there that you do know?"

I could have told him that I knew Shakspeare and Milton almost by heart; that there was scarcely an old chronicle, or older ballad in which I was not versed, and I might have added, that I was tolerably well acquainted with most literary works of any eminence; but I had an instinctive feeling that Mr. Sidney would not consider this knowing anything, and therefore I said humbly, almost tearfully, "I believe I am reckoned expert in needlework."

"Ah well, ah well, that's something;" rejoined Mr. Sidney. Then, after a pause, "Do you know, cousin Dorothy, what there is left for you?"

"No; how should I?"

"Twenty pounds per annum is all you have to depend upon. It will barely find you in washing and clothes; hem—— hem—— I'll see about it; you shall hear from me soon. Don't fret, my dear, or you'll make yourself ill again. Indeed, Dorothy, you have cause to be grateful for your recovery. The doctor says it was quite a toss up."

"Oh, I wish, I wish I had died! why was I spared?" It was wrong, very wrong of me to say this; I feel it now, and my cousin sharply rebuked me. "For shame! Dorothy," he said; "you are arraigning the decrees of Providence." Then, in a milder tone, he added, "I have a scheme for you, so don't despair; but I must first consult my wife; only rely upon it you shan't want."

"Alas! I was not thinking of myself," I replied; "I was thinking on the lost—the dead!"

"But this is foolish;" said Mr. Sidney, as he rose from his chair. "Your mother had but an unquiet time of it here; she is happy now, and it is selfish of you to take on thus. Good-bye, Dorothy, you shall hear from me soon; in the mean time keep up your spirits."

He was gone—and the tears I had restrained in his presence burst forth. "Happy!—is she indeed happy?" I exclaimed—"she, who, but a short while since, hung over me in agony, and whose last moments were embittered by the thought of leaving me to pine and struggle in this vale of misery, unsought—uncared for—unprotected. Dost thou not see me now, my mother?" I asked in reckless anguish. "Dost thou not see me forlorn—destitute—broken-hearted? Dost thou not watch over me from that supernal world whither thou art gone; or is there a dark veil

drawn between me and thee, so that my tears fall unheeded, my sighs unregarded? Then why do I sorrow all the day long? Why do I weep and watch the live-long night? But if, O my mother! from thy throned sphere, thou art permitted to view me prostrate in body, desolate in spirit, then is heaven no heaven to thee!" These were frantic, impious ravings: I have learned better things since then.

On the morning after the conversation above referred to, the nurse came to me. "You seem now so much better, Miss," said she, "that I may safely leave you to shift for yourself. I am wanted by Mrs. Enfield to take charge of her husband. He has gone clean out of his mind; it is a troublesome job to be sure, but then those sort of things pay so well; and there is never any stint of beer—two pints a day at the very least."

"Oh yes! you may go, nurse;" I replied.

The woman paused, moved the chairs and table only to replace them—the furniture of that small apartment was soon arranged—yet still she stayed. Fidgeted and annoyed by these manœuvres, I said, somewhat impatiently, "Do you want anything, nurse?"

"Only, Miss," replied the woman, pertly, "when you can pay me my wages I shall thank you; there was one week's attendance on the poor old lady, the laying out, and——"

"Oh don't give me the items! let me have the sum total;" I exclaimed.

She put a paper into my hands: I was aghast. I felt in my purse; it was almost empty. Must I then, I thought, apply to my cousin for the loan; must I hear him, in his slow, business-like style descant on each separate article; note that nothing was overcharged, nothing had for *her* comfort but what was indispensable? I was lost in these ruminations, when a letter was put into my hands: the contents were as follows:—

DEAR COUSIN DOROTHY,

If you will come to us on the 3rd instant (two days hence) there will be a room vacant for you, as James will be off for school. We purpose making further arrangements so that you may reside with us until you are fortunate enough to secure a home of your own. Send the apothecary and nurse to me; I will settle with them: also, you will forward me an exact account of any other trifling debts you may have incurred. I need not, I am sure, impress upon your mind the imperative necessity of strict economy for the future, and I feel confident you will not object to making yourself generally useful when you come to reside among us. We shall expect you at dinner, at six o'clock, *counting-house time.* My wife and daughters send kind regards, and I am ever, dear cousin Dorothy,

Your sincere well-wisher,

CHARLES SIDNEY.

It was kind, very kind, of Mr. Sidney thus to offer me an asylum. What claim had I—a second cousin?—that degree of relationship which varies with the rank and station of the kinsman; which in the peer or peeress is brought into such close consanguinity, but which, in the humble dependant like myself, is ever regarded as "a distant branch of the family." It was with a heavy heart that I put myself and my very small packages into the hackney-coach which was to convey me to my cousin's. I arrived there at eleven o'clock at night, although I had been invited to dinner. Let none marvel that governesses, dependent relatives, and humble companions,—all indeed who come on sufferance,—should select that same late hour for entering on their strange abode. They come in the hope that the friendly obscurity may conceal the swollen eyelid, the cheek yet blistering with the tears they have shed on quitting the paternal roof for the first time, or on leaving the adopted home

dearer to them, perchance, than the home of their youth: there is the hope too, they may escape, for that one night at least, the peering gaze of curiosity, or the cold supercilious glance of fancied pre-eminence, or inflated self-satisfaction; above all, there is the hope of being at once ushered to their own room, for even in the stranger's house there is one apartment such dare call their own, the room sacred to repose, the penetralia into which none may intrude,—where, unheeded and unrebuked, their tears may flow;—and in that solitary chamber did I weep as none but those who have lost their all *can* weep.

CHAPTER II.

Casa mia, casa mia
Per piccina che tu sia
Tu mi pari una badia.

But to live
With those, whose ev'ry word and gesture thrill
Discordant through our frame; this is severe
Unceasing trial.—But the more severe
Th' appointed trial, the louder does it call
Our courage up, and bid us instant arm
With heaven-ward patience and submission meek;
Trusting, when time and space shall be no more,
To meet those souls from which they now divide us.
If now possessing them, too happy here,
This earth were heaven, and nothing left to wish.

ELIZABETH SMITH.

BUT with the coming day, brighter, happier thoughts arise. The room looks more cheerful when the warm rays of the morning sun are beaming on it; yet, far more than aught else, the necessity for exertion, the feeling that there are duties to perform, preliminaries to be adjusted, and a thousand details to be entered into, alike call on us imperiously to brace

our energies, and arm ourselves with all the panoply of fortitude to meet the coming trial.

I descended to the breakfast-room, and found my cousin Charles actively employed in discussing sundry rashers of bacon, and, by a wise economy of his time, examining at the same moment certain alarming longitudinal papers, which, "like the mathematical definition of a straight line, had length without breadth." Mr. Sidney extended his hand to me,—hoped I had slept well,—that the mattrass was not too hard nor too soft, &c. Then he continued, "I am glad you are an early riser, cousin Dorothy, as I hate having the bread and butter cut downstairs;—Mrs. Sidney too, is lazy; and the girls have their meals with the governess; so, for the future, you can breakfast with me. Will you be so good as to pour me out another cup of tea; one lump and a half of sugar, and only a suspicion of milk."

Gladly I complied with his request, as I felt it a relief to be employed in any way, and I dreaded his attention being again attracted to the bills, which lay at his elbow; but no sooner had he swallowed his tea than he took them up.

"I think, cousin Dorothy, these charges are nefarious; the nurse is a perfect harpy, and as for the apothecary, I'll have his bill taxed. Neither do I believe your mother had half these things; she never was an extravagant woman."

"Perhaps, Sir," I said, with difficulty restraining my tears, "you will have the goodness to advance the money, and I hope by strict economy I may in time repay you."

"Nonsense, my dear; you'll have enough to do to make both ends meet. Of course, as *my* cousin, you must always appear neatly dressed, so I purpose adding five pounds per annum to your little stock, which will make your yearly income twenty-five pounds: my wife thinks that upon this sum you may

do very well. Only be careful. Never run in debt, Dorothy; never rob your tradespeople of their hard-earned gains; remember it is the only species of theft of which persons in your rank of life can be guilty; and now good-bye,—I'm off to the city. Where is my hat and stick?—you'll find them in the closet, just outside the door;—there, that will do,—it cannot but be your own fault if you are not happy and cheerful under my roof. Good-bye, my dear."

A few minutes after his departure, Mrs. Sidney entered the apartment, followed by her eldest daughter, and Miss Sharpe, the governess. Mrs. Sidney received me kindly, her daughter affectionately, and Miss Sharpe eyed me askance as though she considered me an interloper. I very soon understood them all perfectly: perhaps it is a foolish fancy of mine, but I sometimes think I am quick at discerning character.

Mr. Sidney was a perfect man of business, devoted to his mercantile concerns, eager in the pursuit of wealth, yet abhorring speculation — tormentingly punctual and methodical in his habits (it was said indeed that all the clocks and watches in the neighbourhood were regulated by his movements), precise in his manners, and rigorously neat in his attire. In person he was tall, stout, and inflexibly erect; his eye was deep set, and penetrating; his brow thoughtful, as that of one absorbed in calculation; his step "plantigrade" and determined. A man he was of "cheerful yesterdays, and confident to-morrows."

Mrs. Sidney belonged to that numerous class of persons who are, at this present day, so rife in the world;—persons whom La Bruyère has described as "portés par la foule, et entrainés par la multitude." There was a species of moral cowardice in her disposition, a truckling to opinion, a slavish fear of outstepping the bounds of conventional propriety. This all-pervading dread influenced every action and warped every notion. "What will people say?" was

her watch-word; "We must do as others do!" was her favourite aphorism. Alas! how few there are who dare chalk out a path for themselves; how fewer still, who, having chalked it out, walk perseveringly and consistently therein! How many corroding cares and feverish anxieties would be spared to us if we could only dare to think for ourselves!—if we were but to assert our own moral dignity, and scorning the shuffling tricks, the petty manœuvres, and dishonest practices of those who are ever hurtling and jostling each other as they strive, with an energy worthy of a better cause, to ascend yet higher and higher on the ladder of artificial society, we were but content to walk nobly and unblenchingly in the sphere allotted to us.

For aught else that appeared, Mrs. Sidney was an estimable woman, devoted to her husband; fond and proud of her children in no common degree. I am sure too she thought she did not make me feel my dependent situation; but I had a foolish pride, and was apt to be mortified when she would bid me ring the bell or fetch a chair, whilst her own boys, or two or three idle young men, were lounging about the apartment; and I have often felt the blood tingling in my cheeks on hearing her say to a stranger, who would perhaps rise politely to greet me on my entering the room, "Oh don't disturb yourself! 'tis *only* cousin Dorothy."

I had certainly no right to claim deference or attention from any person, much less from young men, for I was very plain, and, worse than that, I was unpardonably dowdy looking; even dress failed to improve me—it was not true in my case, that "fine feathers make fine birds." I had but one offer of marriage during the whole time I lived with the Sidneys, and that was from an *elderly* gentleman (as the boys facetiously called him), of threescore and ten, who was so captivated by the skilful manner in which I bound up a lacerated foot, the property of that mis-

chievous imp Dick Sidney, that, having one evening indulged in sundry liberal potations, and being the next day confined to his bed with a toe as inflamed as his temper, he sent me a proposal of marriage in due form, with a detailed statement of his funded and and landed property, and the offer of a settlement—such a settlement! that I think it would have been the climax of virtue in any woman acquainted with his liberal intentions, not to sigh by anticipation for the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious" widowhood; but I refused him, although my cousin Charles swore I was a fool for my pains, and Mrs. Sidney prophesied I should never have another offer. She was right, and I was right too; and so I believe they all thought when, shortly after, he married a very young lady whom he survived; she having died after four years of connubial bliss, without any visible or tangible complaint. The physicians were fairly posed, they felt her pulse, looked at her tongue, tried the stethoscope to her heart and lungs, and finally, wagging their oracular heads, pronounced it an inward complaint. Her own maid averred she died of *worry*. The malady or the treatment is little known in the "*ars medendi;*" but few are aware how oft it has swollen the bills of mortality.

CHAPTER III.

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight too her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.—WORDSWORTH.

A most pernicious woman.—SHAKSPEARE.

I HAVE not yet spoken of my cousin Viola; how she came by such a name I was for some time at a loss to conjecture. I easily perceived that Mr. and Mrs. Sidney were not the kind of people to make Shakspeare stand godfather to their children; but at length I discovered that, in his younger days, my cousin Charles had been an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. Jordan, especially in her performance of Viola in the *Twelfth Night;* and who indeed that has seen her can ever forget her plaintive, thrilling impersonation of that character? Poor Mr. Sidney! it was the sole tincture of romance in his composition; assuredly it may be pardoned him. And Viola Sidney, well did she become her name! You could not meet the melting gaze of her dark "unfathomable eye," you could not listen to her touching melodious voice, without being assured that so spoke, so gazed the Sicilian maid, when she gave forth the feigned story of her sister's love, by which she would have Orsino in-

terpret her own. Indeed, I have often pondered over that strange anomaly in our nature, by which, so far from imbibing the faults and foibles of our parents and preceptors, we, for the most part, rush into the very contrary extreme; and so it was, that day and night are not more diametrically opposed to each other than were the feelings, pursuits, and dispositions of Mrs. Sidney and her daughter. Theirs was indeed the very antithesis of character. In truth, Viola was romantic, ardent, affectionate to a degree little common, but then she had an energy of mind, a moral rectitude of disposition, a firm and undeviating resolve, which acted as a powerful counterpoise, and together, gave a unity of character which I have rarely seen equalled.

Mrs. Sidney spared neither pains nor expense in the education of her daughters: she was most anxious that they should be instructed in every varied science, and proficients in all the branches of learning. By the bye, it is surely matter of marvel, that sciences to which a Locke, a Boyle, a Cuvier, gave every energy of their colossal minds, nor paused until they had sounded with their plummet nature's profoundest abysses, and forced earth and ocean to yield their hidden treasures; sciences, too, over which a Bacon paled by the midnight lamp, and a Newton sat outwatching the stars,—are at this present day (by a subtle process in which the vivifying principle is supposed to be concentrated within the pages of a catechism) brought down to the comprehension of every young lady at a cheap expenditure of one half hour's labour per diem; whilst four or five hours are diurnally allotted by her to the manual exercise called practising; a division of labour this (where the hands work so much more than the head) which would cause the political economist's blood to run cold. "O monstrous! but one poor halfpenny-worth of bread to all this intolerable deal of sack."

It may be owing to old associations, that I never enter a genuine, *bonâ fide* schoolroom with its instruments of torture, rivalling the Chinese punishments, its reclining boards, and its back-boards, its Sheldrake collars, and its perpendicular chairs, its callisthenics and its gymnastics, that, notwithstanding this garish light, this noonday blaze of learning, which is illuminating with portentous rays our intellectual horizon, and which the eaglet's eye alone could gaze on without blinking;—notwithstanding all this, no sooner do I enter one of these sanctums, than images of the dark ages, of the stern Dominicans and gloomy inquisition, present themselves in dim array before me. The schoolmaster is indeed abroad, but our children or our children's children will live to see him fettered, incarcerated.

O what a reaction there will be one of these days, what a fell destruction, what a dire conflagration of miniature libraries, of homœopathic encyclopedias, of microscopic lexicons, of "Shakspeare abridged for the use of young ladies!"—which laudable process, by the way, always reminds me of the notable annunciation of the play of Hamlet, "the part of the Prince of Denmark omitted by particular desire." Alas! the burning of the Alexandrian Library was but a faint type of the stores of recondite learning and profound philosophy which will then be lost to the world.*

* We fear lest, in the above passage, Cousin Dorothy should have laid herself open to the charge of illiberality: we have an affection for the good lady, and should be sorry to find her so misconceived. If we rightly understand her meaning, it is not the diffusion of knowledge which she deprecates, but only the superficial manner in which that knowledge is conveyed; few indeed there are who, being thus easily enabled to obtain the *show* of learning, will give themselves the trouble of acquiring the substance. We may indeed be told that the lady's virtuous indignation, instead of being levelled at the books in question, ought rather to be directed towards those persons who thus perversely mistake "the means for the end:" but we would, in

O English mothers! English governesses! seek not to make your daughters, your pupils, so universally accomplished; let the fabric of learning be raised on its alone solid foundation,—sound religious knowledge. Heaven forbid that they should enter the lists of theological controversy, or plunge into the fierce clamour of polemical debate, or mingle in the gall and strife of the schools, but when pressed by the bold scorner, or subtler infidel, let them at least be enabled to "give a reason of the hope that is in them." Teach them whose nature is dark and desponding, whose pathway of life is rugged and thorny, whose experience is sown in tears and reaped in bitterness,—teach them early to flee to that Rock whose o'erspreading shadow shall screen them from the fervid rays of prosperity, and be unto them a stronghold in the day of adversity. Cultivate their reasoning powers somewhat more, their imaginative faculties somewhat less; let their minds acquire vigour as their bodies gain strength; let music be no longer the engrossing, all-pervading business of their lives; and be not fearful that the dread anathema of *blue stockingism* shall be fulminated against them. It is the parvenues in knowledge who are ridiculous; it is the "little learning that is the dangerous thing;" it was the wisest of the ancient sages who felt how little he knew, and it will be they among your daughters whose acquirements are the most solid, whose mental powers have been most sedulously exercised, in whom those twin graces, modesty and humility, will shine forth pre-eminently.

Mrs. Sidney, however, did not agree with me in

all humility, ask whether the authors of these *infinitesimal* works, do not themselves (in the railroad expedition with which they travel), altogether neglect the *means* by which that *end* ought to be acquired, and whether it be not indispensable for those who would obtain a juster knowledge of the sciences on which they treat, to retrace their steps instead of advancing on the beaten track.—Ed.

these old fashioned, world-before-the-flood notions; and not content with having collected around her tutors and professors sufficiently numerous to have stocked a university, she considered herself most fortunate in securing the services of Miss Sharpe to aid in the education of her daughters. I know it is very silly, but I sometimes take instinctive, invincible dislikes to certain individuals; and the worst of it is, that, having generally found by experience these said persons do not improve upon acquaintance, I am afraid I shall never cure myself of the prejudice. Now I must own, that from the first moment I saw her, Miss Sharpe sadly disquieted me. She was what is usually called a strong-minded, sensible, shrewd woman (how I do dislike sensible, shrewd women!), she spoke in recitative, uttered threadbare puerilities, and faded second-hand sentimentalities in an oracular, sententious tone of voice. Then, too, she had a host of theories, countless as the stars, which theories always reminded me of the famous mansion built by the amateur architect, who, having called his friends around him to admire the spacious hall, the lofty apartments, the well planned dormitories, heard it observed, to his utter dismay, that all would have been very perfect had he not unfortunately forgotten the staircase. Now it always seemed to me that Miss Sharpe's theories sadly wanted the *practical* staircase; this I know, they were far *above* my comprehension, only perhaps, as Mrs. Sidney once observed, "how was it possible that a person with my limited education, could be any judge of these matters," and I suppose she was right. On the score of beauty, Miss Sharpe had nothing to reproach herself with. For certain it is that face and form were guiltless of ever having caused a sleepless night or uneasy moment to any sighing Strephon. When first I knew her, she had arrived at that debatable point, that borderland age, that neutral ground, when youth is fled and eld

not yet arrived; however, she preserved a prison-house secrecy on this point, which might have served for as perplexing a study to the antiquary as the precise date of the pyramids. Added to all this, Miss Sharpe possessed one of those long Flamingo-like necks, which look as though the owner thereof had, at some period of her life, undergone the penal process of suspension in mid air, commonly called hanging, and been subsequently resuscitated. In fine, she had a pervading, indescribable, *noli me, tangere, chevaux de frise* appearance, which is sufficiently alarming. I wish I could have conquered my dislike to her; I am sure I would have done her a good turn if I could (once in a way), but those every-day civilities were very troublesome.

It was not long before I perceived how very little Viola and Miss Sharpe assimilated; and soon, every hour and half-hour that Miss Sidney could escape from that lady's jurisdiction and the technicalities of schooldom, were passed by her in my apartment: here together, we ranged through the garden of literature, culling the fairest and sweetest flowers of prose, or rarer blossoms of poetry; only those sickly, faded exotics of foreign growth, which seem as though they *will* not flourish in an English soil, but languish and die of the transplantation, we avoided by mutual consent: here, whilst I worked, would she read aloud, and her voice fall on my ear with a sweet lulling tone that reminded me of the flowing cadence of the "Paradise Lost:" here too did we delight our fancy with bright and glowing visions, and store our memory with images of loveliness: here likewise, as we read of holy deeds, of lofty aspirations and immortal enterprises, our eyes would fill with tears, our hearts expand with sympathy, and we would ardently desire to go forth and emulate those high and heroic achievements. Very pleasant were those morning lectures.

CHAPTER IV.

The child is father of the man.—WORDSWORTH.

Even so this happy creature of herself
Is all-sufficient; solitude to her
Is blithe society, who fills the air
With gladness and involuntary songs;
Light are her sallies as the tripping fawn;
Forth startled from the fern where she lay couched,
Unthought of, unexpected, as the stir
Of the soft breeze ruffling the meadow-flowers.

WORDSWORTH.

Cenerentola vien quà, Cenerentola và là;
Cenerentola vien sù, Cenerentola vien giù.

LA CENERENTOLA.

VIOLA SIDNEY was fifteen when I first came to reside with my cousins. The next in age to her was James, a systematic, plodding youth—Mr. Sydney in miniature, only without that gentleman's really kind heart; his impassive wooden face looked as though it had been cut out of one of the desks in his father's counting-house. Then there came Margaret, who should have been a boy, only that I have rarely seen even a boy so wild, so fearless, so heedless of monitions and injunctions. Nothing could daunt her, nothing could tame her. Miss Sharpe and she passed their time in perpetual contests, "never-ending, still beginning" squabbles: as Margaret herself observed, they had their pitched battles, their skirmishes, their "Parthian flights;" and in this last species of warfare, Margaret had greatly the advantage, her light, springy, active

form told exceedingly, as after launching forth some poignant repartee that pierced through and through Miss Sharpe's thin-skinned self-love, the young rebel would stay not for answer, but take to her heels and join her brother Richard; nowhere could she have found a more fitting compeer. Mischievous as a monkey, noisy as a cockatoo, restless as an armadillo —Robin Goodfellow was a staid and sober young gentleman, when compared with Dick Sidney. To be sure they were both very troublesome, but it did my heart good to see young creatures so full of life and spirit, so gleesome, so buoyant, so merry. I thought that the time would come soon enough when the world and its blighting cares, its withering disappointments, its iron truths, and stern realities would chasten their exuberant mirth, tone down their wild spirits, and dim their sunny hours. I could not find it in my heart to scold them, although when I first came among them what a life they led me! Practical jokes were played upon me, inkstands and their contents were sure to be upset (by pure accident of course) whenever I had on a clean muslin apron, or collar; apple-pie beds were made for me; they thought they should have full leave to quiz "old cousin Dorothy." One day, however, they, by an ingenious device, placed a string across the door-way, which was attached to the bolster, pillows, &c., of the bed, in such a manner that, by a little manœuvring on the part of the conspirators, they would infallibly give way during the night. The trick I believe was not meant to explode until I was sound asleep; unfortunately, however, for them and myself, in passing from my room I caught my foot in the string, and falling with great violence to the ground, sprained my ankle. This was far more than they had intended; and never shall I forget the agony depicted on their young faces lest Mr. Sidney should be informed of their mal-practices. In that case indeed they knew full well his anger would be excessive. Several times

during the day did young Dick approach me with penitential face; I am sure the boy longed to throw himself on my mercy, but sundry becks, nods, and winks, from the indomitable Margaret withheld him,—she was too proud to supplicate my forbearance. For nearly a week I was chair-ridden; but as, in answer to all inquiries, I merely said my foot had tripped, and as in addition to the pain I was suffering I received a severe admonition from Mr. Sidney (who by the way was rather addicted to lecturing) on my sin of carelessness, Margaret and Richard were so well satisfied with what they were pleased to term my magnanimous conduct, that from that day forward they took me under their especial protection. It certainly was a great relief to me. In addition to this I had a secret feeling that at least I was not eating the bread of idleness—and this conviction greatly consoled me. In the first place it was discovered I had a tolerably correct ear; so I was allowed to practise reels and country dances for the young people, as Miss Sharpe averred they spoilt her touch for more scientific music; although Margaret with inflexible pertinacity declared "that the fact was, Miss Sharpe always seemed to be running a race with the dancers; in vain they essayed to keep pace with her—the faster they skipped the faster she played—they galloped, still she contrived to keep ahead of them."

Viola too was pleased to say that I played to her singing, instead of making her sing to the accompaniment, as was the wont with Miss Sharpe and others who were in the habit of marring her performance. Yet how could I do otherwise? How could I help dwelling as *she* dwelt on each note in those touching ballads? There was a lingering, sad tone in her low mellow voice, which entered into my very soul, and seemed to evoke the pale dim spectres of bygone regrets. I thought of my lost mother, of hopes long buried, of—— but whither am I wandering?

Very different were Miss Sidney's vocal talents to

those of the tribe of chanting misses who give forth their dulcet strains in a "still, small voice;" which, like that of conscience, is for the most part unheeded. It was indeed a rare treat to listen to Viola.

But to revert to my own occupations. I one day, to oblige Mrs. Sidney, braided a coat for Master Dick, in a style which she declared might vie with the tailor's most elaborate performance; so for the future, this rather masculine kind of occupation devolved on me—Mrs. Sidney having, in a happy moment discovered that she might by this notable process save some few pounds a year. Neither can I tell exactly how it happened, but soon after I entered the house, Marables (Mrs. Sidney's favourite maid), had a sudden revelation, that to borrow her own choice phraseology, "too much was put upon her;" and as she at the same time, by a rare coincidence, made the ingenious discovery that Miss Dorothy had a capital knack of plaiting, from that moment all the cap-borders, ruches, frills, &c. (and they were not a few) fell to my share.

But the worst of all was, that Miss Sharpe being afflicted with very sensitive nerves, I had the luxury of that never sufficiently to be deprecated annual visit to the dentists. Thither had I to escort the children; I had to coax, to bribe, to implore, for I could not scold them on such an occasion. Poor young things! my heart ached for them. Once indeed I remember having had recourse to rather an expert manœuvre, for, whilst Margaret was suffering under Mr.——'s tender mercies, I instituted a game of "bob-cherry" with Dick, who, be it said by the way, had an especial affection for the good things of this life, and just as the boy was making with distended jaw for the prize which I held aloft, the dexterous operator slid in his instrument and hauled forth the "fanged monster." But this of course would not bear repetition; and in general it was tedious work, not to mention the kicks,

and cuffs I received (whilst holding their hands and feet), which would otherwise have fallen to the share of that Prince of Surgeon-Dentists, and most kind-hearted of men, Mr. ——.*

From this same unfortunate malady of weak nerves, Miss Sharpe complained that the riding-school threw her into fits; so thither also I accompanied my cousins, and there in a little dark den called the gallery, where the wind entered from a thousand labyrinthine passages, I had to sit for nearly two hours; their stint was an hour, but when Margaret was once mounted, no Centaur could have been more difficult to detach from his equine half. On she would go; exclaiming at the top of her voice, "I know you won't mind waiting, cousin Dorothy; indeed it must be great fun for you." What was I to say? I could not bear to deprive her of her ride, but it was a dismal time to me. I could not see to work or read; if I approached the fireplace, a volume of smoke drove me back; if I went to the window, I was perished with cold, and had besides to look on half a dozen young ladies, who were following each other in melancholy monotony at a slow dozy pace, which fairly dispirited me. I think the treadmill must have been exhilarating in comparison; and all this was varied only by the stentorian voice of the Batty† of the circle, calling on them after each drowzy canter to walk, which summons the horses mechanically obeyed, without any apparent volition on the part of their riders, breaking their pace at the *wa*; getting into an amble at the *l*; and dropping into a funeral march at the *k*.

All these things combined, kept my time pretty well employed, especially as I had to enact the duenna

* But that the date of this story is perhaps somewhat too early, we should have thought that the celebrated Mr. C—— was here alluded to.—Ed.

† Perhaps a progenitor of him who now "witches the world with noble horsemanship."—Ed.

whilst the masters gave their lessons to Viola; Mrs. Sidney having a confused idea that she had read or heard somewhere of a "St. Preux et Julie," and an "Abelard and Eloise." I don't think she need have disquieted herself. I was glad to be employed, for as I observed before, I thought my services might claim to be placed against the expense of my board and maintenance; and I must say I was rather surprised that Mrs. Sidney somewhat unaccountably persisted in speaking of me as "the visitor." She frequently too would bid me observe that there were very few persons in my situation who had their time so much at their own disposal; and she would say, with a sort of self-commiserating sigh, that I was indeed fortunate in not having entailed on myself the cares of a family —that I had all the privileges of celibacy without any of its disadvantages, its loneliness and abandonment, surrounded as I was by so many happy little faces. And truly my heart did warm very tenderly towards those gay young things; but especially did I love with an intense affection that graceful, swan-like, lovely, and most loveable of human beings, Viola Sidney. There was another too of whom I have not yet spoken; Lucy, the delight of the entire household, who was but an infant when I first came to reside with them; her disposition was so eminently gentle and affectionate. As she grew up, everyone remarked that she was astonishingly like Viola; and so she was like her; but only when Viola was in her pensive moods,—her oriental moods, as I used to term them,—when she drooped her fair head so languishingly, and her large dark eyes seemed to be drinking in excess of love. But then what most charmed me in Viola Sidney was, that I have seen those same eyes dancing in their own sunny rays—I have seen them lit up by the "Promethean spark of intellect"—I have seen them too flash with noble indignation at the tale of oppression or unmerited contumely. It was not one only, but a

complete galaxy of expressions. I scarcely know when I thought her loveliest; each gaze of her varying countenance seemed to me surpassingly beautiful, until another came and dimmed it.

Little Lucy, on the contrary, had but one regard, and that was soft, melting, confiding. Her eyes swam in their own "liquid lustre."

CHAPTER V.

Meanwhile, welcome joy, and feast
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance, and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine.
Rigour now is gone to bed,
And advice with scrupulous head,
Strict age, and sour severity,
With their grave saws in slumber lie.—MILTON.

In age we should remember that we have been young, and in youth that we are to be old.—DR. JOHNSON.

AND thus two years glided away. Viola Sidney reached the age of seventeen, and it was agreed that it was now time for her to enter into society; or, as Mrs. Sidney phrased it, she was to come out.* I thought the term exaggerated, as there was no court ball, or county assembly to mark this all-important epoch in a young lady's career. Miss Sidney was to visit only in her own small sphere. Highly respectable it assuredly was; still, whether she should make her *début* at Mrs. Allen's, the banker's lady, or at Mrs. Williams's, the substantial relict of a wealthy West-India

* Query. Did this same phrase of being "out," take its rise in the time of the Jacobites? Certes it smacks of the *Pretender*.—NOTE BY DOROTHY.

merchant, was I thought matter of little moment; yet did it afford subject of debate between her parents for many a conjugal dialogue, after the fashion of Hector and Andromache, as these colloquies generally arose when Mr. Sidney was about to take his departure, not for the wars, but—the city.* At length there arrived cards for a ball at Mrs. Brookes's, and as this lady's husband was a partner in Mr. Sidney's mercantile firm, it was voted *nem con.* that it would be a most felicitous moment for Viola's entry into the world (at least *their* world) of fashion. I did not much care for routs or parties of any description; indeed I had scarcely ever mingled in society since my first youth. Long attendance on an idolized and invalid mother, had worn away my best years in strict seclusion. The world and its dazzling illusions had been obscured to me at the very moment when I might perchance have been fascinated by them; and since I had taken up my abode in Mr. Sidney's family, none of their friends had ever thought of inviting me. Why indeed should they? I am sure, to borrow the language of the schoolmen, there would have been a sad marring of the grace of congruity if *I* had ventured to exhibit at a ball. But on this evening, this one evening, I would have given worlds to accompany them,—to have seen Viola at her first ball. I believe I thought, in my own silly way, that half the room would be kneeling at her feet. I fancied that a buzz of admiration would track her steps. I thought that Burke's glowing description of France's martyred queen might, without aught of hyperbole, be applied to Viola. I too saw her in my mind's eye, "just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the sphere" in which she was about to move; "glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour, and

* What would our learned Grecians say to this specimen of the Oaristus?—Ed.

joy." I too "thought that ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult." I too, alas! forgot that "the age of chivalry is gone." Greatly to Marables' annoyance, and in defiance of Miss Sharpe's sneers, Viola had insisted that I alone should officiate at her toilette on that memorable evening. Accordingly, I placed the diamond bodkin in her beautiful hair, which was braided round her classical head; it was her sole ornament,—there was no "barbaric pearl or gold," and her white muslin dress was plain and simple as a school-girl's. My task accomplished, I ushered her into the drawing-room. Her mother gazed on her with pardonable vanity. Her father and elder brother were engaged in a luminous dissertation on the insecurity of Mining Companies, Gas Shares, Railway Investments, Patent Inventions, and all the other treacherous quick-sands, and sloughs of despair, into which men have plunged headlong in their quenchless, never-dying pursuit of the delusive phantom—gold. Cursed are they as the son of Jupiter, who in his fierce torments sees the cool, clear waters bubbling round him, yet cannot slake his feverous thirst. Insatiable as the daughters of the horse-leech, who cry "Give! give!" the more they are glutted with their fell banquet. Oh, it made my heart sore to see the grasping, eager look of mute attention with which that boy was fastening on each word that dropped from his father's lips! Surely at *any* period the illimitable love of wealth must ever be regarded as one of the most grovelling and debasing passions which fetter us to this earth, and clog our every nobler aspiration. But, that in the full flush of youth and health when to our buoyant spirits life itself appears an El Dorado, and we float our bark gaily on the stream of time as on a Pactolus, where pleasure's golden sands on either side seem but to wait our outstretched hands to grasp them,—that in these days it should have

power to weave its fatal spell around us, and ensnare us in its specious toils, appears to me dire, portentous, unnatural!

How much longer this edifying conversation might have continued I know not; but Mrs. Sidney broke in upon it by saying to her husband, "Charles, do look at Viola; see, how brilliantly your present shows in her hair."

Mr. Sidney leisurely drew forth his memorandum book, inserted some figures therein, and then turning round, looked fixedly at his daughter for a few seconds, and said, "Come and kiss me, Viola."

This from him was something wonderful. I had never seen him spontaneously embrace his children; still he was a good father, solicitous for their well-doing—sparing no expense in their education, liberal in his gifts, most anxious for their happiness, or what he deemed *ought to be their happiness;* and yet I think his children rather feared and honoured than loved him. They would not run to meet him when he appeared, or climb his knee, or tell him of their little hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows; neither did he expect it from them. Mr. Sidney was a kind but not a fond father. He had never played with his children even in their earliest infancy,—never sat by their couch in sickness—never talked to them freely and unreservedly as I think a father should talk to his children——; but I am rambling on, whilst the carriage is at the door, and Mrs. Sidney, having once more surveyed her daughter *cap-à-pied,* having taken out a pin only to replace it in the self-same angle it had previously formed, and having given her sundry exhortations as to folding her shawl, and many injunctions *not* to take cold, they departed. I did not feel inclined for rest, so I stayed up reading until three in the morning. I had left word that I should like to see Miss Sidney on her return. She therefore came to my room, looking pale and dispirited.

"Well, dearest Viola," I exclaimed, "have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Oh, yes!" she said, languidly, "it was very pleasant, I suppose."

"You suppose! why, did you not dance?"

"Yes, yes! the whole evening. I am knocked up."

"But who were your partners?" I asked eagerly.

"Oh! don't, dear cousin Dorothy, be so merciless as to expect a catalogue *raisonnée* at this time of night, or rather morning; it would be an endless bead-roll."

"Well, but dear Viola, at least tell me, if there were not one among your partners whom you liked better than another; if you had any agreeable conversation?"

"No," she replied, "unless you reckon as such sundry meteorological observations on the density and rarity of the atmosphere—the assurance that it had rained all day, and the confident prediction that it would be fine to-morrow. Then, to be sure, I was edified by an anatomical dissertation on the physical powers of the *première danseuse*, which I think might qualify me to pass my examination at the College of Surgeons. I believe this is all I heard; so good night, dear Cousin Dorothy. I am tired—I mean, I am weary. There is a vast difference between being weary and tired, but it is too late to be analytical. Good night! we will discuss it all to-morrow."

The morrow came, and with it Mrs. Sidney. How different to her daughter's was her account of the evening's amusement. She was in high spirits. It appeared that Viola's *début* had been most triumphant. Mammas had looked apprehensive,—their daughters splenetic and spiteful,—elderly gentlemen had stared her out of countenance, and the young men, after casting a side-long glance at the adjoining mirror, giving an invigorating pull at their collars, and a

refreshing, although almost imperceptible twirl to their ambrosial locks, had crowded round her to "hope against hope," that she would take pity on them for the twelfth, thirteenth, or fourteenth dance. Could a *début* have been made under brighter auspices? And yet I said in answer to Mrs. Sidney's glowing description, "I don't think Viola was much gratified by the sensation she appears to have excited?"

"Oh, really!" replied Mrs. Sidney, with some small degree of irritation. "I don't pretend to understand Viola; she is so foolishly romantic. I cannot think where she has acquired those absurd ideas. I do believe she must have ransacked the circulating libraries for all the maudlin, flimsy stuff that ought to fall dead from the press."

"Viola's romance is scarcely modelled after the pattern of a heroine of the 'Rosa Matilda school;'" I ventured to say.

"I don't know; I wish Viola would talk a little more to me. I am sure it is the wish of my heart that my children should make me their confidant."

Poor Mrs. Sidney! How many mothers have said, do say, and I fear will say, the same thing until the end of time! And yet no mother can have the confidence of her children who does not, in their nursery and school-days, enter into all their pursuits and amusements—who does not listen to their communications with a lively interest, sympathizing with their sorrows, and making their joys her own. She need not then fear that the nurse or the governess will supplant her in the affections of her children. No nurse, no governess ever does this. It is the mother alone who can thus cramp her intellect, and dwarf her comprehension; all else will tire of the tedious narrative of lisping infancy, or the vapid confidence of girlhood. She too, will be careful not to quench *that* confidence by the inopportune lecture or sharp rebuke.

Few are aware of the chilling blight, the drear opaqueness, and desolation of feeling which have at such times fallen on a young girl's heart; when, in the full gush of confiding love and boundless trust, she has asked for sympathy and succour where nature whispered she might not plead in vain; she yet has found her confidence repelled—her trust betrayed. How often, from that moment, has she gone on her way a solitary being, in silence and in loneliness, letting her feelings prey on themselves; and, like the canker-worm in the bud, blighting and blasting their own freshness ere they come to maturity.

Still less will the mother who is really desirous of identifying herself with her daughter's cherished plans and secret thoughts, whisper what she may consider her little girl's bright sally, or childish, yet heart-fraught eloquence to the first chance visitant who may "drop in." I have seen many a child, infant though she were, blush crimson at the recital. It at once destroys the sacred feeling of unreserve that ought to subsist between parent and child. Lastly, she will not (as was Mrs. Sidney's practice) reveal every petty domestic detail or casual observation to her husband. Girls will confide a thousand trifling circumstances to their mothers, with which they would not for worlds their fathers should be acquainted: they have an instinctive feeling that the latter cannot comprehend them.

But to return to our conversation. Mrs. Sidney mused awhile, and then said, "Cousin Dorothy, I have been thinking that among all that crowd of young men we met last night, there was not one whom I should have selected as a husband for Viola. You see, with my daughter's peculiar disposition I am most anxious that she should not form an attachment which her father and I could not at once approve. If Viola falls in love, it will not be a girl's light caprice or evanescent preference."

"You are right there," I replied, with energy; "it would influence her whole future life. A disappointment to her would indeed prove the wreck of her happiness." I felt my eyes fill with tears as I spoke.

"And yet," continued Mrs. Sidney, "who were her partners? A tribe of barristers, 'who never are, but always to be rich;' sons of merchants, too proud to enter their father's counting-houses, and idling and lounging about town the live-long day; starveling curates, 'whose poverty and not their will consents' to their remaining single; besides a sufficient quantity of those helots of the human race, younger sons of younger brothers. Would any of these do for my daughter?"

"Ah! but," I said (and it was an original observation on my part), "riches do not constitute happiness."

"True, cousin Dorothy; but there must be a competency."

Ah! that same word competency, thought I, who shall define it? It would defy the analytical powers of a Tooke, a Johnson, or a Lowth. It may mean four hundred, it may mean four thousand, it may even, by a slight stretch of arithmetical ingenuity, be magnified into fourteen thousand per annum.* Mr. Hume, Miss Martineau, the calculating boy himself, would be puzzled under what row of figures to class it. In Mrs. Sidney's view of the subject, I think it meant a fine house, fine plate, fine servants, fine horses, and as many other fine things as could be conveniently foisted in.

"Viola has been all her life accustomed to luxuries, and she cannot do without them; she must not marry a poor man;" argued Mrs. Sidney with herself, for I never ventured to contradict her, although I thought then, as I had often thought before, how little she

* This is clearly an interpolation; and indeed the ink is paler here than elsewhere.—ED.

appreciated or understood her daughter. "Besides," added Mrs. Sidney, "how people would talk if Viola were not to make a good match!" and with this logical, all-powerful, all-convincing peroration, Mrs. Sidney left the apartment.

CHAPTER VI.

Now the first question fathers ask,
When for their girls fond lovers sue,
Is—What's the settlement you'll make?
You're poor!—he flings the door at you.

RITSON'S ENGLISH SONGS.

Une femme insensible est celle qui n'a pas encore vu celui qu' elle doit aimer.—LA BRUYERE.

WITH all my pride in Viola (and it was not a little), I thought that her future destiny would be similar to that of many another, as gifted and as lovely as herself. I thought that, as offer after offer was rejected by her ambitious parents, her youth would pass, her beauty fade, her attractions fleet away, until the option of refusing or accepting would be no longer left to her. As yet, no harm was done, unless indeed to the disappointed suitors, not one of whom I ever heard of as coming to an untimely end: they all kept their wits (I mean, of course, such of them as had *any wits to keep*) and attained a most tormenting longevity; for I kept them in my eye, as, being an old maid myself, I had an intense sympathy with unfortunate lovers. When last I heard of them, their united ages (to borrow the language of the news-writers when, the twaddle of the house being at a discount, they have recourse to the twaddle of the provinces) amounted to one thousand and ten years. Viola "passed on in

maiden meditation, fancy free;" her father answered the aspirants in a firm clerk-like hand; but, being a shrewd man, and perfectly well aware that these are not the kind of epistles young men show to each other (albeit a *lady's name is mentioned therein*) he composed a species of circular letter, which he had lithographed, only leaving a blank for the date, &c.; this ingenious device saved him a vast deal of trouble. As Viola Sidney had now been out three years, and had attained the mature age of twenty, without even experiencing a passing sentiment for any favoured individual, I began to think, with Dick Sidney, that "if Viola did not take care what she was about, she would end in being an old maid, like that rum-touch, cousin Dorothy." Mr. Sidney stipulated only for wealth and integrity in his future son-in-law; but Mrs. Sidney indulged in certain vague reveries of a broad family-tree, under whose umbrageous covert her daughter might find a pleasant shelter from the storms of life. These various schemes at times amused, and at times saddened me. Viola Sidney was an extremely beautiful girl; nay, more,—the word fascinating might have been coined expressly for her; and without that same gift of fascination, the Venus de Medicis herself (could there be found another Pygmalion to endue her with vitality) although she would doubtless be surrounded by a throng of admirers, might yet fail to secure one real lover. Still I thought, that, notwithstanding all these rare gifts, a girl in Miss Sidney's situation, without fortune to tempt rank, to barter caste for cash, would never move in a higher sphere than that which she now occupied. But I was mistaken; and when the earl of Glenalbert, with a splendid rent-roll, ancient lineage, and untarnished reputation, proposed for Viola, I was well nigh distraught. I am almost ashamed to say how pleased I felt. I thought how well she would become a coronet; I thought how grandly, how gloriously she

would move amidst the fairest of our aristocracy, herself "the fairest of the fair." As for Mrs. Sidney, she was wild with rapture. In the dim matrimonial vista, certain images of a stray baronet, or juvenile *honourable*, caught up at Harrowgate or Cheltenham, had flitted before her mental vision; but a peer of the realm was

> "Like the aloe's lingering flowers;
> Which blossom to the eye of man
> But once in all his dreary span."

And she was proportionably enchanted.

Mr. Sidney too, I had never seen so elated. An impoverished earl would, to his wife, have been a great temptation; but, in *that* case, Mr. Sidney would assuredly have preferred a plain citizen who stood high in the mercantile world; but rank and riches united, were a concurrence of good things that he found it impossible to resist.

"I told you how it would be, Dorothy; I told you how it would be, Charles;" exclaimed Mrs. Sidney, in a frenzy of delight, "and you [this was addressed to her husband] wanted me to cut Mrs. Page, because you said she slighted us. Now she will doubtless be glad enough to visit us;—that spiteful Mrs. Brookes, too, with her '*mauvaise langue*,' and her stiff starched daughter,—how mortified they will be! Lady Elderby, also, who had the insolence not to return my card! I believe she is related to Lord Glenalbert,—however, she shan't be invited to the wedding; I'll put my veto on that."

The honourable Mrs. Page had been a schoolfellow of Mrs. Sidney, the only sprig or scion of nobility with whom she was acquainted; and, although rather a distant offshoot, Mrs. Sidney had always fondly hoped that, through Mrs. Page's medium, her daughter might be grafted into the parent stem of aristocracy; and therefore she persisted in keeping up the acquaintance, although Viola declared that going to Mrs.

Page's parties was a positive infliction, as she was certain she was only asked for her singing. Mrs. Sidney, however, was content to put up with a *great* deal from *great* people. I do not quite know whether if it had chanced to her to be crushed under the wheels of a nobleman's carriage, she would have consoled herself, as did the humble-minded Frenchman, with the philosophic exclamation, "C'était pourtant la voiture de quelque grand seigneur;"—but of this I am certain, that Mrs. Sidney allowed her *feelings* to be *crushed* and *trampled* on in a manner that she would never have permitted from one of her own clique. However, her patience and forbearance met with their due reward. It was at a ball given by Mrs. Page that the earl of Glenalbert was first introduced to Viola; since which, he had visited occasionally at our house, and now, being lord of his own actions, and of a magnificent territorial demesne, he laid himself and his broad lands at her feet.

I was in the room with her when her triumphant mother put the offer into her hands. I watched her narrowly. The blood mounted not to her cheek—there was no smile of secret joy lurking in the corners of her chiselled mouth—no exulting flash from her radiant eye; she was calm and immoveable: my spirits sank below par.

"Well, Viola," said her mother, "are you not delighted? You are indeed a most fortunate girl, I wish you joy, my own, own child; this is the proudest, happiest day of my life. I need not ask you what we are to say. There *can* be but one answer.

"Mother," answered Viola, calmly, "you will give me a little time to think of this. It is sudden, unexpected."

"What," almost shrieked Mrs. Sidney, "you don't mean to refuse him! You can't be so infatuated!"

"Dearest mother, I ask but for a little time: I am bewildered—I must think awhile."

"Surely there is no prior attachment in the case?"

"Oh no, mother, no; my heart is free."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Mrs. Sidney, and she heaved a deep sigh, as though a load were removed from her heart. "You cannot have any personal objections to Lord Glenalbert," she continued; "and I am told he is most amiable."

"He appears so," rejoined Viola, in the same quiet tone.

"No one can deny that he is highly aristocratic in his appearance," continued Mrs. Sidney, with great vehemence of manner.

"He is very gentlemanly."

"Well, well, that is what I mean; you surely do not think that a nobleman must be of necessity very tall, with a lofty bearing, and a regal commanding air! You surely cannot have any such vulgar prejudices; and as to his nobility of character—his disinterestedness—he has proved that sufficiently by selecting you, Viola;—he that might have chosen from among the first families of the land."

Mr. Sidney entered at this crisis. "There, Viola," he said, extending a written sheet of paper to her, "will this do? I hope it is not too humble. Gratified as I am, I would not, by any means, appear servile or cringing. He gets a treasure in you, Viola; a monarch might be proud to share his crown with you, my girl; and now he will expect to hear the confirmation of his happiness from your own lips. Shall I bid him come to-day?"

I could not help observing to myself that Mr. Sidney had not even consulted his daughter as to what answer he should send to Lord Glenalbert's proposal. He seemed to make sure of her assent; if Viola noticed this, she stood too much in awe of her father to make any comment thereon; but, in answer to his last question, she said, with breathless earnest ness, "Oh, not to-day, papa; to-morrow."

"Nay, Viola, this is foolish," rejoined Mr. Sidney; "this is unlike you to keep him in suspense. Rely upon it, my girl, your modesty won't be severely taxed; a glance, a word, half a word from you will suffice."

"I cannot see him to-day, father." Mrs. Sidney here came to her daughter's relief. "Viola is right, Charles; remember it is late, and if Lord Glenalbert calls to-day, we must ask him to dinner; and I shall have to send out for fish, and there must be an omelette, and sundry other knick-knacks,—and things never do when they are prepared in a hurry; besides, the cook won't have time."

"My dear Anne," said her husband, "rely upon it, Lord Glenalbert will have other things to think of, than how your dinner is dressed. There is sure to be enough, and that is everything: besides, if we are to make compliments with him it will never do; you forget that he must now of course dine here every day."

"Oh, I shan't mind after once or twice, Charles; but first impressions are everything."

Mr. Sidney acquiesced. In all controversies relative to domestic affairs, Mrs. Sidney invariably carried the day.

I did not quite like Miss Sidney's manner during the rest of that eventful afternoon; she seemed to be arguing or reasoning herself, as it were, into love. "I think, cousin Dorothy," said she to me when we were left alone, "I think, I am sure, I like Lord Glenalbert very much; I am always glad when he asks me to dance. It is very pleasant to meet with any one who takes so real an interest in all one says or does;—I have heard several traits of him that I think perfectly admirable. I do not know any one I meet in society whom I like so well, or whom I hold in such high estimation: and as to falling in love, as it is called, with any one, I

don't think that is at all in my way; I certainly have not any very great aptitude for that exquisite diversion;" and so she went on. How was I to answer her? She did not ask my advice, and even if she had, I should have given it distrustfully. I never had a lover; and love, the love matrimonial, was a sealed book to me. What then did I know of such matters? To be sure, years ago I had indulged a vain, delusive dream,—I had staked my dearest hopes upon —— but what am I doing? I am not writing my own history. The next day, Lord Glenalbert called; and, after that interview, Viola looked radiantly happy. "It is a pleasant thing, Dorothy," said she, when she came to my room at night, "to be the cause of happiness to others. There is something God-like in it,—it seems to expand one's very soul. My heart bounded again as Lord Glenalbert thanked me for his felicity; and my parents too, Dorothy,—how gratified they seem! My father told me he felt ten years younger; and my mother wept for joy as she embraced me. It is delightful to look on them."

CHAPTER VII.

The poet falsified:—"The course of true love runs smooth."

L'amour qui croît peu à peu et par degrés, ressemble trop à l'amitié pour être une passion violente.—La Bruyere.

Some weeks passed away; my fears, for I had had my fears, were rapidly subsiding. There was a manly sincerity, a "glow of heart," and an unfailing generosity in Lord Glenalbert's disposition, which daily, hourly, made themselves felt, and could not fail to be appreciated by all who had the privilege of his acquaintance. In literary attainments and grasp of intellect,

he was decidedly inferior to Viola; but then, I have never seen her equal. I do not know that he was less well informed than the average number of young gentlemen whom it is one's good fortune to fall in with: he was eloquent on the game laws; conversant in the leading articles of the Tory newspapers; wrote his own language correctly, spoke it without any violation of grammar; appreciated a French *bon mot*, and quoted Latin *sans* using false quantities: "complete in all good graces to grace a gentleman." That he did not quite understand Viola I felt assured, and when she would, almost unconsciously to herself, burst forth like an inspired sibyl, or rapt improvisatrice, into some impassioned gush of poetry, or give vent to her high-toned feelings in a strain of fervid eloquence, I have seen him laugh, in his frank joyous manner, at her enthusiasm; and then, for one moment, would she look annoyed. There is something chilling to an idealist in being laughed at. Argument, remonstrance, exhortation, they can bear; but few ardent natures are proof against the contemptuous sneer, or barbed shaft of ridicule. Still, these were slight breezes that scarcely ruffled the smooth current of her life. That she had become attached to Lord Glenalbert, I could not doubt. It was a calm, concentrated feeling, a quiet yet heart-felt assurance of happiness, a "sober certainty of waking bliss," far better, perhaps, than the fierce whirlwind of passion. I did not agree with her that she had not the capability of loving intensely. I thought hers was a nature formed to love with that love, which alas! too often borders on idolatry. Still I had no doubt as to her eventual felicity. I felt, that as a husband, Lord Glenalbert would each day become dearer to her. His mild, unpretending virtues were made for the sacred, home-felt bliss of domestic life; and for Viola, once married, I had no fears. Her pure, noble nature, her firm principles, built as they were on a rock of adamant, would insure her from all peril.

She, I knew, was safe. It was curious, too, to mark Lord Glenalbert's conduct during this period. His love for Viola partook of the nature of his character,—outwardly it was calm, very calm; before a stranger he would shrink into himself, and would seem loth to pay her those trifling attentions and civilities which their relative situation seemed to demand. Yet was his love of no common order; it pervaded his entire being, resembling what philosophers tell us of the magnetic influence,—a power universally diffused, yet imperceptible to us until, perhaps, by the slight accident of a balanced needle, it proves its latent existence and reality. Viola Sidney was the least ambitious of human beings. I am very certain that the adventitious gifts of rank and wealth had for her no attractions; yet did she feel gratified at the prospect of having her name enrolled amongst the good and great—of being identified with that family of whom, during countless generations, it might be truly averred, that "les hommes étaient sans peur, et les femmes sans reproche." She felt that Lord Glenalbert's talents were scarcely of that order which would entitle him to hold a conspicuous place in his country's councils, but she likewise felt, that much might be done by their united influence in private life; and they had mutually resolved to pass the greater part of the year at his magnificent estate in the north, and to improve, to the utmost of their power, the vast talent which would be committed to their trust. For my own part I had indeed reason to love Lord Glenalbert; he treated me with a deference and courtesy that I thought had passed away with the olden time: indeed, I think his love for Viola had raised the whole sex in his estimation; old or young, vapid or witty, handsome or ugly, it mattered but little to Lord Glenalbert; to be a woman was enough to insure his respect, and claim his homage. With her own bright, radiant look did Viola say to me one day, "Cousin Dorothy, you are to live

with us when we are married, as a friend, a beloved friend, remember; you shall have your own apartments and join us when you please. Nay do not thank me," she said, as I was about to interrupt her: "it was Lord Glenalbert's proposition, and I loved him for being the first to think of it." My eyes swam in tears. To live with Viola; to enjoy her society without restraint; I, who would have toiled for her, slaved for her, died for her; it was almost too much for me to bear. The thought of parting with her had indeed sadly quenched the joy I should otherwise have felt in her brilliant prospects; it was selfish, I know, but in vain I had essayed to conquer it. Now I was at the zenith of felicity. I felt that I ought to be more grieved at the prospect of leaving Mr. and Mrs. Sidney, for they had received me when I was an outcast. At that moment, too, I inclined to think I had done injustice to Miss Sharpe—that perhaps, after all, she was not so utterly insupportable or rancorous as I was wont to fancy her; but these feelings passed away, and joy, unmingled joy at my own felicitous prospects, engrossed my every thought, and outweighed all other considerations.

Weeks had rolled into months, and still the wedding-day was not fixed; yet were the lawyers, milliners, jewellers, the sutlers of the camp, sounding their glad note of preparation. At first, indeed, the marriage had been well nigh broken off; for Lady Glenalbert, who was travelling on the continent for the restoration of her youngest daughter's health, had written such a cold, ungracious letter, in answer to one with which Mr. Sidney had favoured her, detailing the proposed alliance between Lord Glenalbert and his daughter, that Viola, with her usual good feeling, had resolutely declared no power on earth should induce her to enter a family where her presence would so manifestly be deemed an intrusion. Mrs. Sidney thought "the letter was very well in its way,—somewhat stiff, but that doubtless was the countess's manner." Lord Glenalbert

had also heard from his mother, he was evidently much disquieted, but he did not impart the contents of her letter to Viola. Immediately, however, he wrote again :—he was an only son, and he conquered. There came a second letter from the countess to Lord Glenalbert enclosing one for Mr. Sidney, and, this time, it was at least *civilly* worded, expressing her eager wish to see her son happy, and doubting not that his choice would meet her approbation. In reply to Lord Glenalbert, she expressed her readiness to accede to his request of being present at the wedding; only stipulating that she must have his escort, as she would not venture to cross the sea at that inclement season, without his protection; Lord Glenalbert of course did not hesitate to comply with this request, yet keenly he felt the separation from Viola; he struggled hard against it, but he was evidently deeply moved. It was their first parting; they had, however, the consolation of knowing it would also be their last, as the wedding was to take place immediately on his return. At Lord Glenalbert's particular desire, Viola was to pass the time of his absence with his maternal aunt, the Lady Sarah Herbert. She was the widow of a gentleman of ancient family, and extensive property, and was now spending the Christmas holidays at her estate in the south of England, where she had collected round her a bevy of relations and friends.

"Viola will there be introduced to many members of my family;" observed Lord Glenalbert to me one day, when we were discussing this plan. "She must not first come among them as my wife; but they shall learn to love and reverence her as Miss Sidney."

I honoured him for that sentiment.

Lord Glenalbert took his departure for the Continent.

Lady Sarah Herbert sent her invitation in due form. But the distance was great; Mrs. Sidney did not like to leave her young family; and she also

wished to be on the spot to superintend her daughter's *trousseau;* so it was arranged that I should accompany Miss Sidney.

CHAPTER VIII.

The mistletoe hung in the castle hall,
The holly branch shone on the old oak wall;
The Baron's retainers were blithe and gay
Keeping their Christmas holyday.

HAINES BAILEY.

All pages of human life are worth studying; the wise instruct, the gay divert us, the imprudent teach us what to shun, the absurd cure the spleen.—MRS. MONTAGUE.

I HAVE, I fear, what many would call a foolish prejudice against Christmas festivities degenerating, with those to whom Providence has granted its choicest gifts, into mere physical enjoyment of the advantages of which their "cup of life" is already full. I can indeed understand right well that to the toil-worn mechanic, the weary artizan, or slave of the factory—to thousands, with whom "the night is joint labourer with the day," this gracious festival may be one of licensed mirth and jollity. Alas for these, our hereditary bondsmen*, these toilers in factory or in mine; victims as they are of an unholy necessity, slaves to an unrighteous utilitarianism, whose shrunken frames, crushed limbs, and debased intellect, tell in fearful characters a tale of cruel wrong and dire oppression. A blot are they in our body politic, a stain in our body social, a canker-worm in our mercantile pros-

* Tempora mutantur, &c. Much has been done since this passage was written, to ameliorate the condition of the factory operative, and of the labouring classes in general—but much remains to do.—ED.

perity, a corrosive mildew preying on its very vitals; for surely, surely, no land can ever prosper where such enormities are encouraged, protected, nay lauded. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that He cannot hear," and sooner or later will the cry of those unfortunates ascend up before Him, and pierce into His mercy seat, and draw down His thunderbolts of judgment and of wrath upon this hitherto favoured country. I can understand full well, I say, that to these, and such as these, this gracious festival may be one of licensed mirth and jollity; that the song with which they hail the morn that gives them a brief respite from iron toil, and carking drudgery, may be in *them* a fitting Christmas carol: for who shall say whether to their darkened minds, this sense of freedom from temporal slavery may not be a powerful medium of raising their souls to that far more blessed redemption from spiritual thraldom with which this season is fraught? But that the powerful, the noble, the wealthy, with whom life itself is a perpetual holiday,—that these, with their rare talents, high privileges, and mighty responsibilities, should set apart this day on which we commemorate a boon so vast, so immeasurable that the dazzled soul trembles even while she rejoices over it, a day too "dark with excessive bright," to those who should rashly lay unhallowed hands on the ark of the new covenant, and dive into a mystery which reason's fathom line could never touch—that these, I repeat, should mark out this solemn season for wassail and for revelry, is an anomaly that I care not to unravel.

Situated, however, as I was, I felt it my duty to accompany Miss Sidney, and accordingly we set forth on our journey. We were two days on the road, but the weather was delightfully mild for the season; the sun yet powerful enough to chequer the surrounding country with that variety of light and shade which

gives such charm to the landscape. Viola was at my side speaking to me unreservedly of all her plans and prospects for the future; plans so feasible, so sober, so reasonable, that I could not doubt they would be realized,—prospects so rational that they seemed to insure a perpetuity of bliss. But as we approached that lordly castle, my spirits flagged; my heart sank; I was nervous in the extreme. I, who had not been in society for so many years; I, who was so plain, so *gauche*, so painfully sensible of my own deficiencies, to encounter a group of strange faces, to live familiarly with them, and that for days and weeks; I literally trembled. Viola did all she could to console me: we entered the gates; the post-boys cracked their whips; although in my nervous trepidation, I besought them not to hurry, the horses galloped,—we were whirled along the magnificent avenue,—we were at the door. Infinite was my relief to find that the whole party, tempted by the beauty of the day, had gone on an exploratory expedition. We were conducted to our rooms; the very magnificence of the apartment depressed me, contrasted too as it was with my own dormitory at Mr. Sidney's,—eleven feet by nine. The bed with its rich canopy and costly valance, the toilette table with its rare implements, that seemed designed for anything but use. (Have I not said, that Lady Sarah Herbert's was a "show house?") The packages were brought to my room, and I began most sedulously putting things in their places. The employment had a soothing effect on me, and having donned my grey satin gown (my best dress), I began to find out that it must be getting very late; so I resolved upon going in quest of Viola. I had no one to guide me, and I felt reluctant to ring the bell: but I fancied I should know the room again, as it had been pointed out to me on our arrival. I wandered through extensive corridors, interminable galleries, and zig-zag passages, and was getting somewhat

alarmed, when I heard voices near me; in my anxiety to escape them, I turned suddenly, and found myself fronting the principal staircase. A man, half jockey, half gentleman, and a lady equipped *à l'Amazone*, were ascending it. She was speaking in a loud shrill voice; so loud, that I thought she at least, like myself, must be one of the Parias of the world; she had a rose in the button-hole of her habit which the gentleman was endeavouring to snatch.

"Now, positively, Lord John, you sha'nt," exclaimed the young lady; "how can you be so silly?—as it is I shall be too late for dinner,—that short cut of yours must have been at least three miles out of the way; I shall have such a preachment from mamma,—let me pass."

"Not unless you give me the rose, Lady Emmeline;" answered the gentleman, with what I think he meant for an insinuating gesture.

"How very absurd you are," she said; "my maid shall pick you half a score,—they grow in clusters near the door. Now don't detain me, they are all assembled in the drawing-room; how very provoking you are; the dinner-bell will ring in another moment; it may be very well for you, coming in after the soup, but it won't do for me."

Nor for me either, thought I. I had been standing irresolute at the top of the stairs whilst this romping bout (for it was nothing less) was going on, and I had coughed twice or thrice to give them warning of my presence, but they were too much occupied to heed me; now, however, I rushed past them,—the lady blushed,—the gentleman laughed. I asked a servant who was passing at the moment to show me the drawing-room. Fortunately he threw open the door for me, or I should never had courage to do so for myself. I thought how hard it was of Viola to have neglected me; but at least, I reflected, no one will think it worth their while to take notice of me: I was mistaken. I

had not an idea that lords and ladies could be as rude and ill bred as the commonalty, indeed more so than any I had ever encountered; for as I walked along ready to sink into the earth, every eyeglass was levelled at me; I thought of poor soldiers running the gauntlet; and I heard a gentlemen say in no very low tone, to his neighbour; "Is this *la belle fiancée?* Poor Glenalbert! I had always heard that Master Cupid's visual organs were somewhat defective, but I never knew till now that he was stone-blind." The young lady to whom this lively sally was addressed, laughed most obligingly, as all young ladies think it incumbent on them to do when young gentlemen make abortive attempts at wit for their express edification, and the *bon mot* flew around the circle with the unerring rapidity of the fiery cross in the "Lady of the Lake." My ears tingled, my cheeks reddened, my presence of mind was rapidly forsaking me. I was well nigh bursting into tears. At this juncture Lady Sarah Herbert came forward from a group assembled round the fireplace. She addressed me haughtily, but with civility; in my confusion I extended my hand; she either did not or would not see it, and curtsied to me profoundly. A servant threw open the door, and announced that dinner was served.

"Where is Miss Sidney, Madam?" said the Lady Sarah.

"I don't know," I stammered out.

"Matilda, my dear," said Lady Sarah, to a piece of still life near her, "will you go for Miss Sidney?" But ere the young lady addressed could comply, the door again opened, and there entered Viola Sidney.

How unspeakably lovely she looked!

The company had paired off for dinner, but as she advanced, ladies and gentlemen had again recourse to their glasses. Nothing discomposed, she moved quietly on, her head rather thrown back; a slight, a very slight accession of colour in her cheeks; her eyes half-

veiled by their drooping lids, but yet not cast down. It was curious to mark the revulsion of feeling that instantaneously took place; eye glasses were dropped and eyes opened. The gentlemen murmured approbation; the ladies were seized with a little fidgetty, nervous cough; Viola approached Lady Sarah, and curtsied to her gracefully, but with a slight degree of haughtiness, almost imperceptible to any one, who was not, like myself, acquainted with her every gesture. Lady Sarah paused one moment; then throwing her arms round Viola's neck, kissed her affectionately, and said, "My dear Miss Sidney, I am sincerely happy to see you under my roof."

The company were, as I have already said, in "couplets," and Lady Sarah was looking anxiously around her for a gentlemen to escort Miss Sidney; when she seeing me in the back ground (for Lady Sarah had not apportioned me to any unfortunate youth), sprang across the room, and said, "Dear cousin Dorothy, we will go together. Pray don't apologise, Lady Sarah; I am sure I could not have a more agreeable companion."

We were separated at the dinner table, but I now found no lack of courtesy, as the young men seemed vying with each other who should pay me most attention.

The house was very full of company, and, day by day, we had fresh accessions of visitors. There was always much to be seen, much to be done. Turretcliff Castle was situated on the verge of a bold and rocky coast, from whence the glorious ocean might be viewed in all its startling grandeur and wild loveliness. Viola, who had only looked on the sea at Brighton or Hastings or some other of the marine stores of health and pleasure, where the beach is daily strewed with young ladies absorbed in the scientific process of collecting sea-weeds, to be preserved, dried, or conserved, in sheets of white paper; or diligently searching for

specimens of crustaceology, which they, for the most part, term conchology; where, too, you are sure to be haunted by countless ragged urchins, with their bare legs, like a set of leech gatherers, or Highlanders;—Viola, I say, was delighted

> "To walk, where few had ever walked before,
> About the rocks that ran along the shore;
> Pleasant it was to view the sea gulls strive
> Against the storm, or in the ocean dive."

In these rambles along that wintry, stern coast, I frequently accompanied her, whilst the rest of the party were roaming far and wide over the face of the earth in quest of more terrene amusements. We had to endure much quizzing on our romantic propensities, and I was frequently asked, in a bantering tone, whether I had not a lover at sea. It is very odd, but I do not think any one believes in an abstract love of the ocean. That Viola should delight in these lonely rambles, was not deemed remarkable; young ladies whose lovers are away may be pardoned a little eccentricity.

Miss Sidney's engagement to Lord Glenalbert was, of course, well known; still there were not wanting many young gentlemen who would kindly have beguiled the weary interval, during which she was separated from her lover, by a little *innocent* flirtation, but it would not do; without the slightest prudery or affectation, she talked gaily and pleasantly to all, but none could say he was more highly favoured than another.

There was shortly to be a ball at the castle, and as the neighbourhood was extensive and populous, it was arranged that every family of respectability should be invited; persons with whom it would have been the death-blow of aristocracy to have mingled in London, but with whom Lady Sarah thought that, without any very great compromise of her dignity, she might associate in the country. The ball was to be a magnificent thing in its way, and many people were coming from London expressly for it. Amongst these were

Mrs. and Miss Page, who thought nothing of travelling between one and two hundred miles for a ball. By the bye, I forgot to mention in its place, that as soon as Viola's projected union with Lord Glenalbert was publicly known, Mrs. Page suddenly became most exemplary in the matter of visiting, &c. She even delicately insinuated to Mrs. Sidney that she took a great deal of credit to herself in bringing about that affair, as it was at her house the young people had first met; and she wound up her discourse by saying, that "of all things in the world, her daughter Helen would like to be Miss Sidney's bridemaid; that Helen had always taken a great fancy to Miss Sidney, and there were not many persons Helen liked, she was so fastidious." It is not to be supposed that Mrs. Sidney was weak enough to be deceived by these fine speeches; but she remembered that Miss Page was a niece of Lord Dareall, and as such she thought her name would figure well among the list of fashionables who were to grace her daughter's nuptials.

Miss Sidney had no love-sick female friend, no "confidante mad in white dimity," with whom she might engage in the ordinary traffic of sentimentalities, the tender whispers, the rose-coloured notes, the mutual sighs, the gentle raillery, the exchange of blushes, and the *quid pro quo* locks of hair, auburn for black, or black for auburn; she was wont to say that I supplied the place of all younger female associates, besides which, she was very fond of her brothers and sisters; and I don't know how it is, but I think people with strong domestic attachments are not apt to pick up stray intimacies; therefore, when Mrs. Sidney said she wished her to have Miss Page for her bride-maid, Viola answered, "As you please, mamma; I think Helen Page a good-natured, well-meaning little person; I dislike Mrs. Page, because she was most insolent to us; but I have no objection to her daughter, who—"

"Oh, my dear Viola!" interrupted her mother, "let by-gones be by-gones; you will now hold such an infinitely higher station than poor Mrs. Page, that it would be quite beneath you to evince any sensitiveness to former slights;" and as Viola did not reply, the matter was arranged to Mrs. Sidney's satisfaction.

This is rather a "per saltum," or frog-like way of telling a story; but to return to the main indictment.

Miss Page was very fat; she piqued herself on possessing great *naïveté* and simplicity of character. She was one of those "unlessoned girls, unschooled, unpractised," who, with a fearless frankness, give utterance to every crude thought that passes through their fertile brains; she had afflictingly high spirits, and laughed so loud, and talked so fast, that you felt, after speaking with her (or rather after hearing her speak, for as to anything like a reciprocity of communication, that was quite out of the question), a weight on your chest, a struggling for breath, similar to that pleasantest sensation, the nightmare; in short, she ran where less mercurial people would have walked; romped where others only danced; and jested on many subjects which the prejudices of old-fashioned people have from time immemorial venerated as sacred; added to all which, she had a string of pet phrases that would have made a philologist's hair stand on end; such as, a nice man, a dear little chair, a sweet table, a glorious dress, a darling bonnet, a bewitching necklace, &c., &c. Such was Miss Page, or such she appeared to me, after two or three weeks' residence in a country house, amidst a host of signally silly young men, and superlatively sentimental young ladies, had brought her absurdities into full play.

CHAPTER IX.

My mind misgives;
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels.

SHAKSPEARE.

Avec les hommes l'amour entre par les yeux, avec les femmes par les oreilles.—FRENCH PROVERB.

Les êtres crées l'une pour l'autre doivent se reconnaître à la première vue.—WERNER.

LADY SARAH HERBERT had three children. Her eldest son was married, and residing on the continent, being remarkable for naught that I could learn, but his preference of every other country to the one honoured with his nativity. Miss Herbert was a singular abstraction. She passed her life in a Rip Van Winkle state of torpor; a tortoise was active-minded and agile in comparison; it was impossible to look on her without feeling a drowsy sensation creep over you. In person, she was only noticeable for the colour of her hair, which looked as though it had been spun by the silk-worm; her thin compressed lips (but that was no wonder, since she never opened them but to eat or drink), and heavy drooping lids, which seemed always about to play the part of nature's soft nurse, and curtain the eyes beneath them into most profound repose. From "eve to morn, from morn to dewy eve" again, would she sit at her embroidery, which was in her hands a complete Penolope's

web: whether she undid every night her morning's work, I never could discover; certain, however, it is, that it did not appear to progress. Visions of Herculaneum and Pompeii were associated with her presence. I never looked at her without thinking of the baker transfixed at his oven, or the soldier discovered immoveable in the guard-room, or the luckless wretch with his keys and purse of gold.

These could scarcely present more unfortunate specimens of "still life," than did Miss Matilda Herbert, in her own fair person. Now, if it were not that the wise ones tell us a negative quality in algebra is worse than nothing, I should have thought that *nothing could* be worse than this young lady's blank inanity; yet was it the fashion amongst all the visitors at Turretcliff to pronounce Miss Herbert a sweet girl, which rather posed me, until I recollected Burke's notable observation, that "insipid things of all kinds, such as water, oil, &c., approach more nearly to the nature of sweetness, than to that of any other taste;" and then most conscientiously could I join in the encomium.

Lady Sarah Herbert's favourite, beyond all controversy, was her youngest son; she had been daily expecting his arrival at Turretcliff during the last fortnight; but the evening of the ball arrived, and no Mr. Herbert had made his appearance. We were all assembled in the dancing-room, waiting the arrival of the first guests. Lady Sarah, having looked at the clock, walked to the windows, which fronted the avenue, and exhibited manifold tokens of perturbation, exclaimed, in an aggrieved tone—

"Well, I suppose we must give up all hopes of Frank for this evening; how I shall get on without him I don't know; he is the life of every party. It is the more provoking, as he had promised to introduce his friend Mr. Lyndham, who is, I understand, a *rara avis;* a man *comme il y en a peu*, a poet, artist, musi-

cian, handsome, brave, accomplished;—as Frank tells me, he wants but one thing—"

"A wife, I suppose," interrupted Miss Page, giggling vehemently.

"No, Miss Page," answered Lady Sarah,—"something rather more difficult to attain:—that unromantic, yet necessary qualification—cash."

"Ah," rejoined Miss Page, "that is always the way; all the nice men are poor. I never yet knew a rich man who was not insufferable."

"Thank you, Miss Page," exclaimed, simultaneously, Sir Harry Sutton, who revelled in fifteen thousand a year, and Mr. Towers, who luxuriated in twelve.

"My dear Helen," shouted Mrs. Page, from the further end of the apartment, "what nonsense you talk. I am sure you don't mean half you are saying."

"Well, now, mamma," said the stout Miss Page, "if you think I shall ever marry for money, you are vastly mistaken. I give you fair warning——."

But she was interrupted in her harangue, as the company were now assembling fast; and I retired to a remote corner, where I might escape observation; whilst, according to my usual practice, I amused myself by watching the proceedings of those around me.

I had never before been at a regular ball. The brilliantly lighted apartments—the pillars twined with laurels, evergreens, and crimson berries—the young ladies in their gay dresses, looking like a rich parterre of tulips—the dowagers in their fantastic turbans and rare jewels, formed a *coup d'œil* that at first enchanted me: but, on nearer inspection, the illusion vanished. Not far from where I sat, a band of musicians was stationed, who had been sent for from London expressly to do honour to that evening's festivities. There was one among them who excited my liveliest

compassion, until I was forced to turn away sick at heart; for his attenuated frame, sunken cheek, and hollow eye, at once betrayed his malady. He had been playing the flageolet (I never heard anything half so sweet), and he now paused, whilst his chest heaved painfully, his breathing came thick and short, and his feeble cough seemed yet powerful enough to rack his frail anatomy. The master of the band turned towards him, for he missed those silvery tones; and the poor musician once more took up the melody, for he knew that he had a wife and children, whose morrow's meal depended on that night's profits. Ah! little did they think, those gay young dancers, whose feet were bounding along the smooth floor to that lively measure —little did they reck, that, at every breath that poor man drew, whilst painfully ministering to their pleasure, his life was ebbing fast away. I turned from him to look at the dancers. I gazed with wonder on those amiable philanthropists of the ball-room, whom I saw bestowing, with rare impartiality, the same look of pleased attention—the same bright smile on each successive partner, whether old or young, animated or dull, foppish or frivolous, solemn or sententious; and I looked with pity on that far smaller class, who sat with eyes fixed on the door, as though their gaze could have pierced its panels. I sighed as I marked their look of blank disappointment, when one after another entered; but *he* (without whose presence the ball so long looked forward to, so ardently desired, would seem "flat, stale, and unprofitable") still failed to appear. These, I observed, could not have numbered above eighteen or nineteen years, young girls, who had not yet served their apprenticeship to the tactics of the ball-room—who had still to learn to put a mask on their feelings.

But soon my attention was attracted to a small knot of ladies and gentlemen, who were now casting most malign glances at each other; now gazing on

the ceiling with a fine look of "Parnassian abstraction;" now throwing their heads languishingly on one side; and now looking eagerly around them, with an "and if you will not have me choose" expression of countenance. These, I afterwards learned, were a group of "lionets," not having yet attained their full (literary) growth—small authors and authoresses, the minnows of literature, perpetrators of "fugitive pieces," most aptly named, and lavish contributors to magazines and miscellanies, scrap books and albums,* —ingenious youth of both sexes, who write so very lusciously, that one is forced to taste sparingly of their good things, as of the frothy article called "trifle," lest a surfeit be the sad consequence of too liberal an indulgence. But what amused me yet more, were the manœuvres of a cluster of youths, stationed near the doorway, waiting till their *arbiter elegantiarum*, Count Henri de Moustache, or Lord Meltonturf,† had given his influential dictum as to the belle of the evening; then did they, like a set of "geese errant," flock round the favoured damsel, hoping, sighing, despairing, dying—

> ——— "For all contend,
> To win her grace whom all commend."

Nor less did I smile at the male coquet, who, with smooth, plausible, persuasive manner, with due inflection and dropping of the voice, that makes his "Are you engaged for the next quadrille?" almost equivalent to a declaration of love, flits from damsel to damsel, softly whispering that he never knew one "so perfect, or so peerless; created of every creature's best," as the individual whom he is for the nonce

* Perhaps those gorgeous little volumes, called "annuals," which, like the bright ephemera of a summer's noon, sport a gay and brief existence, had not yet started into life.—Ed.

† Might not this rather euphonious title, which is, we believe, now extinct, be revived when the next batch of peers are created?—Ed.

addressing. I was disturbed in these ruminations by the approach of two young men, who stationed themselves against the pillar behind which I had screened myself. Immediately they rivetted my attention, by the exceeding contrast which they formed to each other, although both were, I thought, remarkably good-looking. The one had those very blue eyes and fair hair, which at once float back the imagination to past ages, when the Saxon race of kings held sway; his might certainly be called an "historical face." He had a frank, good-humoured, or rather reckless expression of countenance, strong white teeth, which seemed obtrusively to force themselves upon your notice, a wide mouth, that, even in repose, had a lurking smile hovering in the corners, and a genial air of boon companionship. The other was tall, dark, with that indescribable look of intellect, so totally independent of features, cheeks a little, a very little, hollow, a pervading something that gave a faint suspision of consumption. He was just what young ladies in general term "interesting," and their mammas unhesitatingly anathematise as "downright ugly." He was leaning against the pillar with folded arms—the look, the attitude, was that which English painters invariably give to their Italian bandits, or Spanish bravos. The first words I heard were from the Saxon-haired youth:

"'Tis useless, Lyndham, looking at her so; she is very beautiful, but she is bespoken, man—*la belle fiancée*, as they call her in these parts; so here is Miss Irby, or Miss Carew—very chatty, lively girls, both. Come, come, we want dancers; the ladies (bless them!) preponderate. Don't stand in that imposing attitude, with your arms folded thus; you must have copied it from the plaster casts of Napoleon which those grinning Italian varlets hawk about the streets—

'I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute.'

Spout it forth, man! Come, Lyndham, don't be in one of your confounded misanthropic humours; the world's good enough, if you will only think so."

"I tell you, Herbert, I wish to be introduced to—— *la belle fiancée*, as you call her: tell me who she is, and tell me also who is——."

"The happy man," interrupted Mr. Herbert, speaking very fast, as though he was anxious to get over the ground as speedily as possible. "Why, no less a personage than my cousin, Glenalbert. Devilish lucky she is to have secured him. I wish I had a manœuvring mamma to push me forward in the world; for they tell me the mother managed it all, 'will ye, nill ye,'—there was no escaping her, and Glenalbert was always rather soft—— hearted."

"But who is she?" said Mr. Lyndham, impatiently.

"Don't pelt me with questions, Lyndham; 'tis a species of small shot I can't endure: have patience, and I'll tell you all I know. She is a Miss Sidney, the daughter of a tradesman."

"A tradesman, Frank? You jest; do be serious."

"Well, a merchant—all the same—wholesale or retail dealers—where's the difference? It really is a terrible *mésalliance;* I assure you we are all very much annoyed. My mother at first was outrageous: but she is exceedingly attached to Glenalbert; and, to oblige him, she asked Miss Sidney here. Besides, after all, what can one do? 'il faut hurler avec les loups.' She will be Countess of Glenalbert; and it is just as well not to make an enemy of her."

"How beautiful she is," said Mr. Lyndham, as if speaking in a soliloquy; "she realizes all one's day-dreams."

"Yes, yes, a fine-looking girl enough," rejoined Mr. Herbert. "Small feet, hands, and ears too—signs of blood: how the deuce did she come by them? Had she been an heiress, I could have forgiven Glenalbert; the thing would then have brought its own excuse;

but she will have only about five or six thousand pounds, with a reversionary prospect of perhaps as much more at her father's death—just enough to keep her in gloves and eau de Cologne. Now, if Glenalbert had been bitten with your rabid romantic folly, Lyndham, it would not have surprised me; but he is a prosaic, matter-of-fact, methodical, orthodox youth: 'there's never any of these demure boys come to any proof.'"

"At least," replied Mr. Lyndham, "he appears to have sufficient romance to have fallen in love most" . . . . .

"Oh yes!" again interrupted the voluble Mr. Herbert; "plunged in like another Leander; and, like that same bad swimmer, could not keep his head above water. In love, quotha! why, my mother wrote me word, that they are going to bury themselves in the country, in some old tumble-down abbey, where 'Boreas, and Cesias, and Argestes loud,' shall, with their confounded uproar, silence the matrimonial brawls within. 'Ye gods, it doth amaze me, Cassius.' Poor Glenalbert! I think we might get a statute of lunacy taken out against him, and they could appoint me guardian of his affairs."

"You must not, then, bring that young lady into court; she would, in her own person, offer too fair an excuse for" . . . .

"Nonsense, Lyndham! I don't look upon you as a competent judge in these matters. Poets in general are but out-pensioners of Bedlam—licensed madmen, who walk about within the rules of the asylum, under certain restrictions best known to themselves. But here comes my *alma mater;* I am no unnatural son; Oxford is but my *arida nutrix.* Here she comes—doubtless to upbraid us with our lack of gallantry. Perhaps her eloquence may prevail with you. I shall go in search of that little goose, Helen Page. Vale! we

shall meet at Philippi,—I mean we shall meet in the supper-room.

Lady Sarah Herbert now advanced to Mr. Lyndham; she apologised gracefully to him for the neglect which she feared he must have experienced on his arrival, owing to the bustle and confusion attendant on a large ball; and she then asked him if he would not allow her to provide him with a partner.

"Yes—no,"—replied Mr. Lyndham, "I think not." But, after a moment's pause, he said, "Will you introduce me to that young lady—there?"

"I shall have much pleasure." And Lady Sarah laid her hand upon a shiny-faced, innocent little piece of rurality—"My dear, Miss Carew"—

"Oh no," cried Mr. Lyndham, "I mean the young lady who is approaching us."

Lady Sarah paused, hesitated, and said, with a smile—

"Oh yes! certainly; but I think it right to forewarn you, Miss Sidney is engaged."

"For this quadrille?" asked Mr. Lyndham, with admirable *naïveté*.

"No, but for a more indissoluble partnership: Miss Sidney is a *fiancée*."

"Forewarned is forearmed, Lady Sarah; now will you not present me?"

Miss Sidney had by this time joined me, and was exclaiming:

"Dear cousin Dorothy, where have you hid yourself? I have sought you all night."

When Lady Sarah, approaching us, said:

"Viola, dear, Mr. Lyndham wishes to be introduced to you."

Viola slightly curtsied, and was pursuing her conversation with myself, when Mr. Lyndham said:

"Miss Sidney, may I have the honour of dancing with you?"

"It is a waltz, I believe," answered Viola, "and I don't mean to waltz this evening."

"Oh, not valse, Viola?" exclaimed Miss Page, who had just skipped up to us. "What can you mean? I do so doat on a valse,—it is such a dear sweet dance; but perhaps you think '*un certo Signore*' would be angry: however, don't be afraid; we are all far too discreet to tell tales out of school."

Miss Sidney's lip slightly curled.

"Now I am sure this is your reign, my dear," continued Miss Page; "and were I in your place, I would make the most of it; by-and-by, perhaps, you must submit, but I have no idea of men giving themselves airs before marriage."

"Are you not going to dance, Helen?" asked Viola, in a tone that implied she wished her away.

"Lor, my dear, I am dying to valse, but no one asks me. I am sure I don't know what's come to the men now-a-days; they are all so shy. I thought that droll creature, Frank Herbert, meant to ask me; but after chatting a little while, away he went, just as the music struck up. It really is too provoking. Can't you introduce me to any one, Viola? You have always such lots of partners."

Mr. Lyndham was still hovering near us. Miss Sidney involuntarily looked at him; so did poor Miss Page.

"I shall be happy," said Mr. Lyndham, with some hesitation of manner, "to offer my services, if you are in want of a partner."

The invitation was unpromising; but Miss Page linked her arm in his, and, in another moment, they were meandering through the mazes of the waltz. Meanwhile, Viola and I took a seat at the further end of the apartment; we were soon involved in an animated discussion, on things past, present and to come, whilst the ball-room and its gay inmates were for the time forgotten. A sudden pause in the music caused

me to look up, when the dance being ended, I saw Miss Page and Mr. Lyndham coming towards us; he was evidently leading, or rather dragging, her in our vicinity, notwithstanding her strenuous assertions, that "Mamma must be in the refreshment room;" but on he came; and as they stood before us, Miss Page exclaimed —

"Ah! here you are, my dear; well, I declare, you quite haunt us; but now, Viola, I have been accusing Mr. Lyndham of being a poet, but he won't confess the 'soft impeachment;' however, I shall make him write in my album. I hope Lord Byron is your model, Mr. Lyndham; because, to be very frank with you, he is the only poet I can tolerate. I know it is the fashion to admire Shakspeare, Milton, and other of those worthies, but I am above such silly prejudices. Now do tell me, have you published—what is your *nom de guerre*—Orlando, or the Greek letter Delta? You see I know all about authorship."

"Perhaps, Miss Page, you are yourself a votary of the muses?" said Mr. Lyndham, in a sarcastic tone.

"Oh dear, no," replied Miss Page, with her incorrigible giggle. "What should make you think so? Do I look like a poetess? I was never told so before. Now, as to you, Mr. Lyndham, I should have known you anywhere for a poet."

"Indeed," he answered, looking rather amused. "May I ask what are, in your estimation, the generic marks?"

"Oh, you know, a poet must be of necessity very pale and pensive, with 'eyes dark as the night,' and ——in short, he must be very interesting. Oh, lor, what have I said? I did not mean you were interesting, Mr. Lyndham; now did I, Viola?"

"I really was not attending to you, Helen," Viola replied, absently.

"Will you dance with me, Miss Sidney," said Mr.

Lyndham (and his voice now first struck me as being remarkably sweet); "it is a quadrille." And Viola did dance with him.

Why was it, that, during this same quadrille, a strange presentiment came over me—an indescribable dread—a vague and dizzy sense of impending misery? I could not have defined it. Assuredly there was nothing in her demeanour to give rise to it. I had rarely if ever, seen her so little animated; yet was she listening attentively, but with the air of one who is rather perplexed than amused. No; I think it was his manner that staggered me. He was looking at her with intense admiration;—not his the vulgar stare of the clown, neither was it the impassioned gaze of the *roué;* but rather the reverential look (it is a bold word but I can think of no other)—that look of mingled homage and tenderness which every woman feels by intuition, even although her averted gaze may seem to take no cognizance of it. Alas! with the coming days my fears were not dissipated. For the first time in my life, I was the maiden cousin, the strict duenna, the many-eyed Argus; but I remembered, that only a little, a very little, time would elapse, ere we should be summoned home—and this thought reassured me.

Here, alas! I was mistaken. Lord Glenalbert was at first detained by stress of weather. He said (and I believe it) that he would willingly have perilled his life to be with us, or rather with *her*, once again; but he had a precious freight to convoy, and he durst not risk the safety of those so deservedly dear to him. Then there came another, and a far longer delay. His youngest sister had had a relapse; her life was despaired of; and he could not leave his mother in her hour of sorrow. I proposed that we should return home; but I was overruled. There was a secret, I might almost say a magic, power of attraction in Viola Sidney, that was felt and acknowledged by all who

came within the sphere of its influence, and by none more than Lady Sarah Herbert. Day by day she became more attached to Viola. She declared she could not part with her; and she wrote so warmly on the subject to Mrs. Sidney, that the latter, only too gratified to find her daughter loved and appreciated by those who would shortly be so nearly connected with her, gave a full and unqualified consent, that Viola should remain at Turretcliff until Lord Glenalbert's return.

Nearly three months elapsed before that event took place; and, prior to it, the Christmas party had one by one dispersed, only Mr. Lyndham still lingered on —and Lady Sarah Herbert, woman of the world though she was, perceived nought of this. Perhaps I ought to have written to Mr. or Mrs. Sidney; but what recital had I to give? and of whom should it be given? Viola never even spoke of Mr. Lyndham to me, neither did she ever walk with him or see him alone. Their conversation was always on general subjects—on literary topics, &c. I had no data to go upon—nothing tangible, nothing that I could fasten on. Mine were vague notions, shadowy suspicions; vain would have been my endeavours to impart them to another. Even when I paused for one moment, to analyse them, they seemed to me like the "baseless fabric of a vision, which leaves not a rack behind;" then did I look on them as idle fears—then did I think they arose only from my little knowledge of the world—then, too did I despise myself for imagining, even for one short moment, that Viola Sidney could be capable of aught that hovered on dissimulation or treachery. But again and again they recurred, they haunted, beset me, waylaid me, like some ghastly spectre, which, to our distempered fancy, oft seems, with "baleful eyes," to glare upon us in the watches of the night;—vainly we struggle and wrestle with the phantom, for still it prevails, and still obtrudes its hateful image.

But a few pages of Miss Sidney's journal, now lying before me, blotted with her tears, and in many places so scorched, as to be utterly illegible, will give a far better insight into that period than whole volumes from *my* pen. They may, perhaps, serve to show the peculiar stamp of her character, which I feel I should ineffectually attempt to portray.

Oh! there is nothing like a journal for laying bare the mechanism of the mind—the secret workings of the soul. It is our memory's floodgate—"our oracle, our other self, our counsel's consistory." Secret as the grave, it hath no venomed babbling tongue, to wound us with false cozening reports; it may not play the traitor to our secret thoughts. Friendship can be but a faint type of it; for, even from our dearest friend, there are sentiments we veil and secrets we conceal. Unwittingly, unconsciously we give a tone to the voice, a colour to the action, which at once invests it with a light not its own; but, in these written soliloquies, these communings of the soul with herself, we are at least sincere—we describe ourselves, we paint our feelings, as fearlessly and impartially as it is given to us to know them. There is a beautiful eastern proverb, that "the daughter of the voice is far better than the son of the ink;" and truly, at any time, I would rather hear my friend talk, than receive from him or her the best-filled sheet of paper that ever was penned; but the people of Syria could never have kept a journal, or they would have discovered that there are times when the "son of the ink is far better than the daughter of the voice."

CHAPTER X.

EXTRACTS FROM MISS SIDNEY'S JOURNAL.

"A strange dissembling sex we women are;
Well may we men, when we ourselves, deceive."

Oh! that our lives, which flee so fast,
In purity were such,
That not an image of the past
Should fear that pencil's touch.

WORDSWORTH.

DECEMBER 26th. A day of consultation, of disquiet, of preparation for the ball. It went off well. Mr. Herbert and his friend Mr. Lyndham, after having been expected all day, came in very late, owing to disasters on the road. Mr. Herbert stuns me—he is so vociferous; besides, he never says a good thing, or what he means for such, but he pauses for you to chorus it with a laugh. Now, this is intolerable. I cannot laugh upon compulsion—the very knowledge that it is expected from me, at once divests me of the inclination. Mr. Lyndham I do not quite understand; he is different to any person I ever met with. Query, Is his manner natural, or affected? If the latter, he is to me singularly revolting. Of all the petty manœuvres for gaining notoriety, this same prevailing puppyism of feigning eccentricity is, I think the most insupportable. If Mr. Lyndham does not fall into this error, he has an originality of manner which I like, and I rejoice that I have met with him. I wish Lord Glenalbert had been at the ball. I braided my hair as he best likes it.

December 27th. I sought cousin Dorothy at an early hour this morning, but found that the last night's dissipation had been too much for her. She was suffering from a violent headache, and declared her inability to walk; so I wandered alone on the sea-shore. O how refreshing were the cool breezes after the feverish heat and glare of the ball-room! I walked beneath those beetling cliffs whose toppling crags and crumbling summits seemed to tell a tale of "vaulting ambition that o'erleaps itself." I walked on with my bonnet in my hand, my hair waving in the wind, my blood bounding in my veins; and, as the snowy spray came drifting in my face, I experienced that thrilling conviction of buoyant, springy existence which the sea-breeze alone can give. I walked along that pebbly strand, and I mused till my brain ached, and thought became lofty, and imagination winged her flight into the "dream-land of poetry." I thought of the forlorn feeling of heart-broken desolation with which the daughter of Minos, the lone Ariadne, watched, from her sea-girt island, the swiftly receding sail of the false-hearted Theseus, and I thought how, in anguish of mind and weariness of spirit, she must, from day to day, have strained that aching gaze in vain expectation of her lover's return; and I marvelled that those who had once loved, and plighted their faith, could ever be guilty of the black sin of infidelity. Memory wandered into the cavernous recesses of the past, and I strove to pierce the dim vista of futurity; and I longed for Surrey's mirror, as images many and various came crowding o'er my bewildered fancy, shadowy and indistinct as erst appeared the spectre monarchs to the conscience-stricken usurper. In these moments, it seemed to me that my soul was striving to free itself from the manacles that fetter it to earth. Dear to me is the ocean in all its fitful moods, and wild varieties. I love it when it sends forth its filmy spray, sparkling in the sunbeams, like some lavish monarch

in gorgeous Oriental tale, flinging pearls and rubies around him. I love it, too, when not a ripple disturbs its clear expanse, and it reposes in stilly slumber beneath the fond guardianship of the pale-eyed moon, who looks down intently on it with her calm, thoughtful gaze, like a young Madonna watching o'er the placid sleep of infancy: but better still I love it, albeit that love is mingled with awe, when viewed, as to-day, in its wild sublimity of roar and tempest, when it comes bounding on like a war-horse, who "snuffs the battle afar off;" or when wave rushes after wave, like some hard task-master goading and lashing into frenzy his helpless victim. The triumph of the strong over the weak all the world over. Had I been a pagan, Neptune would have been the God of my adoration; yet why do the poets and painters represent the ocean deity as a young man with hair black as the raven's wing? Surely he should be wrinkled and furrowed as is the "ribbed sea-sand;" his beard should be white as ocean's foam; he should be seated in a light bark of mother-of-pearl; a crown of coral on his head; his trident richly ornamented with sparry gems; his mantle of sea-green shot with blue, and studded o'er with the glistering scales of his finny subjects. Thus would I have the ocean monarch painted. In the evening we had music; Mr. Lyndham sang,—I like his voice much: I like his conversation too. We all retired early, being knocked up by our last night's dissipation.

December 28th. A day so undeniably wet and stormy, that even the gentlemen could not move out: so it was settled we should all meet in the library after breakfast, and that each should contribute his or her quota to the general amusement. I meditated making my escape to my own apartment, as did also cousin Dorothy, but they had recourse to the *vi et armis* system, and we "force perforce" remained. Oh! what shrieking, shouting, romping, laughing. Every

game that ever was invented to exorcise the demon *ennui* we had recourse to in succession. Even poor cousin Dorothy was pressed into the service. How bewildered she looked, and how invariably she blurted out wrong answers, and blundered through all. Her mistakes were provocative of superabundant merriment. Dear cousin Dorothy! her singleness of heart, benignant disposition, rare sympathy, and unfailing self-denial, render her the delight and solace of all who are blessed with her acquaintance.*

Even Mr. Lyndham pretermitted his usual gravity, and was as thoughtlessly gay as a school-boy in the holidays,—as my own dear brother Dick. At length, exhausted with all these tumultuous proceedings, we had recourse to the quieter pastime of caricaturing each other's faces; for the most part they were vile daubs, yet Mr. Lyndham's sketch of me was universally pronounced to be exceedingly like. I'll ask him for it, and give it to Glenalbert. The storm which had been brewing all the evening rose furiously during the night. I trembled lest Lord Glenalbert should be on his voyage homewards. It was mirk midnight, and all around me were hushed in their first deep slumber, typical of the dreamless repose of the grave, which, to the sleepers, shall be perchance but as countless nights "rolled into one."

This is indeed the season when the wild elements keep their mad carnival. The red lightning glared through the leaden masses of cloud, like the heated flush on the dull face of ebriety, and the shrill wind stormed and raved like the wakeful dame who waits the bacchanal's return.

At length the genius of the tempest "plucked his magic garment" from him—the thunder came rolling

* Alas! Viola looked at me through the radiant prism of devoted affection, which evermore throws its own bright hues on all seen through its flattering medium.—NOTE BY DOROTHY.

on with a subdued voice, no louder than the muffled drum that sounds its requiem o'er a soldier's grave; then, in that elemental pause, did my quickened ear catch the brief shot of the "distress gun," imploring the aid which none had power to render. Alas, for the living crew, as shot after shot is fired in vain; and they, the doomed, await their fate in passive, unavailing agony.

For worlds I would not pass another such night.

December 29th. I rose early this morning, and found the coast lined with people. The sea still heaved and swelled with the agitation of the last night's storm. My ears had not deceived me; a vessel had been wrecked during the night, as a quantity of beams, casks, and planks (which the waves had cast upon a neighbouring rock) too plainly showed. The wreck was recognised as being that of a ship which had left the neighbouring port some few months since, and was doubtless homeward-bound at the time when she was driven among the rocks; and soon a cry arose amongst the people assembled on the shore, that a black speck, now first seen at a distance floating on the waves, must be the body of a man: none hesitated to affirm that life had been long extinct, and yet unparalleled were the exertions of the men, aided by Mr. Lyndham and others of our party, to bring the corpse to shore. No open boat could have lived in such a sea; and, therefore, they were forced to wait until the waves should propel it towards the strand. The women crowded round with pale, anxious faces, each dreading lest, in that corpse, she should recognise the livid remains of a husband, or son, or brother, —and strenuously did they incite the men, by prayers and tears, to bring the body to land, that it might at least "have Christian burial,"—whilst every nerve was strained in agony, and every pulse was quivering with agitation; and bravely did sailors and men peril their lives, as they rushed into the surf,—now breasting the

raging rea—now beaten back by the waves—now redoubling their efforts. It was all in vain: the receding billows proved too strong for them. I confess I could not understand the cry of agony that arose from amongst the bystanders, as the body was again carried out to sea—far, far beyond our ken, for I thought, would not that corpse repose as tranquilly in ocean's caves as in a vaulted sepulchre; and I asked, is not that fathomless abyss as fitting a charnel-house as the darkest chamber cloven in the profoundest recesses of earth's rent bosom? and involuntarily I repeated to myself that thrilling verse of "Revelation:" "and the sea gave up the dead which were in it," &c.

The morning's adventure had made us all *triste;* and our evening party was somewhat thinned, owing to sundry colds and chills caught by standing on the beach. It is really pitiable to see Lord John Littlewit and Mr. Frank Herbert. They yawn, and sigh, and look so unutterably forlorn. I cannot laugh at them as others do,—I think it a curse to be so dependent on foreign resources and artificial excitement.

> "O lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,
> Lost to the noble sallies of the soul,
> Who think it solitude to be alone.
> Communion sweet! communion large and high.
> Our reason, guardian angel and our God!
> Then nearest these, when others most remote;
> And all ere long shall be remote but these;
> How dreadful then to meet them all alone,
> A stranger! unacknowledged—unapproved!"

December 30th. Another wet morning. Lord John—to borrow his own choice phraseology—"could not stand it any longer." So he is off. How disappointed that fair girl, Lady Emmeline, looked when he signified his intention of leaving. Both she and her mother evidently expected that he would have proposed;—and so he ought,—he has been flirting most

flagrantly. However, I don't imagine Lady Emmeline will break her heart; even before the breakfast was fairly over, she had commenced a most promising flirtation with Mr. Herbert; but her vigilant mamma peered over her spectacles, as much as to say, "that won't do." When Lord John Littlewit was flirting with her daughter, the countess always seemed to me to be blessed with most convenient fits of abstraction. These heartless people, and their heartless proceedings, disquiet me far more than in reason they ought to do. Mr. Lyndham, at Lady Sarah's earnest request, read some of his poetry aloud: perhaps it is somewhat too sad, too morbid, throwing as it does a dark veil over the fairest and brightest of Heaven's gifts; yet I could not choose but like it. He says, he does not contemplate publishing, but I doubt,—I doubt; the *aura popularis* blows softly and fragrantly on the poet's fevered brow, and few there are who do not court its breezes.

December 31st. Spent the morning in my room, writing to Lord Glenalbert, and, according to my promise, transcribed several pages of this journal; but I was obliged to omit the storm, and many other passages, as he would, I know, declare that such converse is too lofty for him. How provoking this is, and how I wish he had only a slight tinct of Mr. Lyndham's exuberant fancy!—but then he has so many good and great qualities. Yes, I am thrice blessed in his love; it will indeed be my own fault if I am not a happy woman. I accompanied Lady Sarah in her drive this afternoon; she is a kind-hearted, excellent person, although as a friend, an intellectual companion, she can never be to me what Dorothy is. Lady Sarah spoke with heartfelt grief of her daughter's deplorable want of energy. It is indeed sad to contemplate this mental lethargy.

January 1st. A letter from Lord Glenalbert! This is beginning the new year well. It was delivered

to me at breakfast; and I had to undergo manifold worn witticisms and missish pleasantries from Helen Page, which I bore without wincing. Glenalbert's letter is worthy of him; kind, generous, confiding.

* * * * *

For some days after the receipt of this letter Miss Sidney passed her time in her own apartment; and her journal is chiefly filled with a list of the books she read, and her remarks thereon. They are beautiful —they are likewise true; and might, I think, serve as models for criticisms, since it is *ideas* rather than *words* on which she dilates; neither does she appear to be ever thinking of the *vox populi*, the effect that the particular passage may have on the majority; but she abides by her own instinctive taste, which, to me at least, seems to lead her at once to the very source of grace and harmony. The next day I find marked is:

January 15th. As nearly all our party leave us to-morrow, it was voted, *nem. con.* that we should memorialize this our last day by some signal *exploit*. After an almost interminable discussion as to our "whereabouts," the majority, as in more important matters, carried the day; and it was settled that we should visit the ruins of an old abbey situated about six miles from Turretcliff. Some were to go in carriages and some on horseback; but when I mentioned my intention of joining the equestrian detachment, cousin Dorothy, to my unutterable surprise, entreated that I would accompany her in the carriage, as the weather was severe. In vain I assured her that I never was cold on horseback; that, on the contrary, I was always shivering inside a carriage: she was impracticable; indeed she seemed so very anxious, and she is always so ready to promote my pleasure at the expense of her own, that it would have been most ungracious in me to refuse her. Mr. Lyndham rode by the carriage, but cousin Dorothy had the face-ache, so, the glasses

being up, we had little or no conversation; I mean with him, for there was no lack of dialogue or rather monologue inside the carriage. Our *partie quarrée* consisted of Dorothy, who was more than usually silent (I suppose, poor thing, she was suffering from her face-ache); of Miss Herbert, who never opened her mouth except to slide in a sandwich or slide out a yawn; of myself, who did my possible to listen to Mr. Towers, who, swathed in furs and cloaked up to the eyes, had prudentially petitioned for the vacant seat in our carriage.

Upon him then devolved the task of furnishing forth our intellectual banquet; and, to do him justice, he acquitted himself right valiantly; now involving himself and his hearers in all the mazes of a tedious disquisition, now endeavouring, with invincible patience, to elucidate the scholastic distinction between metaphysical and physical mental philosophy; but here we perceived, with dismay, that he had got rather beyond his depth, and he was floundering about in hopeless perplexity, when he suddenly recollected that such topics were rather beyond a lady's comprehension, and forthwith, he was about to discuss the lighter and more interesting subjects of "animal organization," as distinguished from "spiritual corporeity," when the whole cavalcade paused, and we were called on to alight. (Oh! what a congested repertory of savourless facts and useless theories is that man's brain, thought I). We descended from the carriage; Mr. Lyndham had dismounted, and was, I am sure, coming towards us, when Mr. Towers grasped my arm, linked it within his, and, seizing Dorothy, began mounting the hill at eight miles an hour; it was enough to tire down a hare. I begged him to halt, as we were out-walking our party, and I felt sure poor Dorothy could scarcely keep pace with his gigantic strides; but he declared he considered it a point of honour that we should be the first to arrive at the abbey: and as Dorothy, to my no little asto-

nishment, declared that the extreme rigour of the day made the brisk motion delightful to her, it only remained for me to submit to my fate. Notwithstanding the speed at which we walked, Mr. Towers managed to resume his luminous dissertation. (What lungs the man must have!) Now, I like "peripatetic philosophy" well enough, when.....I can walk away from it; but in this case that was quite impossible; he kept a vigilant eye upon us; there was no escaping him. Mr. Towers is an inflated piece of pomposity, but he has the reputation here of being a very intelligent person. Certes, there is nothing like a reputation, good, bad, or indifferent: this is incontestable. The abbey was a glorious sight, and amply compensated for the tedium of the drive; white as it was with the fanciful crystallization of the hoar-frost, and glittering in the mid-day sun, the ruin looked like a fairy building sparkling with jewels; whilst from the arched roof the pendent icicles showed like drops of gorgeous chandeliers, only that, as it is with all nature's workmanship, in brilliancy of colouring they far exceeded art's most elaborate performance. But keenly did I feel the truth of that notable observation, "how different is the being shown over a place, to silently for ourselves detecting the genius of it!" for here—where I could have wandered for ever, thinking on bygone days, when these old walls were vocal with the praise of God,—when at morn, at noon, at even, ay, and at solemn midnight too, the devotees gave forth their choral symphonies; when these crumbling cells were tenanted by those whose "places know them no more;" when the stern bigot, the unbending ascetic, the rapt quietist, the deluded mystic, the inflated enthusiast, the sated voluptuary, and self-gnawing misanthrope, mingled with the devoted saint, the sincere penitent, the incipient martyr, and the self-denying follower of a crucified Saviour; —here, too, where I longed for some solitary nook,

where I might give vent to my surcharged feelings in those triumphant lines of Wordsworth:

* "And who that walks where men of ancient days
Have wrought with god-like arm the deeds of praise,
Feels not the spirit of the place control;
Exalt and agitate his labouring soul."

Here likewise, where I could have dwelt on those yet more solemn and more appropriate lines from the same gifted bard.†

"Ah, what a warning for a thoughtless man,
Could field, or grove, or any spot of earth,
Show to his eye an image of the pangs
Which it hath witnessed; render back an echo
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod."

Here was I forced to listen to an architectural lecture on transepts and groins, architraves, mullions, lanceolated windows and fretted roofs; all this, endurable enough in its way, and which, in a well-preserved cathedral, I should have thought sufficiently edifying, but which struck me as being terribly misplaced in that "ruin, wild and hoary." Mr. Towers was indeed most ruthless! He led us up break-neck staircases, and over crumbling galleries, where a fly could scarcely have kept its footing, and where I saw that poor Dorothy (who is certainly guiltless of trenching on the masculine prerogative of courage) was well nigh sick with terror—still she went perseveringly on; she would not confess that she was at all giddy, although I am confident her head swam round,

* We question much whether the poem from which these lines are quoted could have been published at the time Miss Sidney wrote her journal.—Ed.

† Methinks this poet has steeped has pen in the Helicon, at the very spot where the stream (after flinging itself over rock and barrier, churning and foaming as it goes, heated and polluted through its mad course) descends into the valley filtered from every impurity, alluviating and enamelling the verdant prairies, and making sweet music as it flows.—Note by Dorothy.

and I saw her cling most vigorously to our cicerone. I felt, too, that Mr. Towers' elaborate disquisitions must be very wearisome to Dorothy, who, albeit an enthusiastic admirer of nature, never troubles herself with the bare technicalities of science; yet had she the grace to appear really interested, and contrived, every now and then, to slide in a remark more or less to the purpose. I never knew her so provokingly intelligent, whilst I was troubled with Falstaff's malady, "the malady of not marking, the disease of not listening." At length our perilous survey was finished. "The force of 'prosing' could no further go," and Mr. Towers proposed we should join the rest of the party: we found them scattered in various directions. Some few, having discovered an echo, were exercising their lungs; singing, shouting, laughing, and, by a happily devised piece of gallantry, were calling on the names of the ladies: Mr. Frank Herbert, in particular, was lustily exclaiming, "Miss Page, do you love me,—will you not say yes?" and when the echo, taking up the last word, said "yes," Miss Page clapped her hands, and vowed it was a very saucy echo to presume to answer for her.

Others were prowling about what had once been the refectory and kitchen, declaring they were famished, and doubting not but they should find a cobwebby flagon of wine, or mouldy pasty. When was there ever yet a party of pleasure who did not complain of being ravenously hungry; although, as in our case, they may, just previously to leaving home, have taken a most substantial luncheon? Others again (and these were gentlemen) had discovered a subterranean passage, and with many emphatic nods, shrugs, and winks, were marvelling "how far off was the next nunnery," and venting manifold witticisms as to "those monks being sad dogs," &c.

The young ladies were, for the most part, indulging in divers rhapsodies, ecstasies, and sentimentalities,

which (but I would not impugn their sincerity) appeared somewhat over-strained and exaggerated; Lady Emmeline and Miss Irby were quoting Byron and Moore, not, as I thought, very appositely; and Miss Carew (alas, for the bathos!) declared it was the very place for a pic-nic. One young lady, in especial, had ventured on a most imposing display; she had taken out her sketch-book and was diligently copying the north-east side of the abbey; this, too, in defiance of the "rude breath" of the keen north-east wind, which was blowing full upon her. Poor thing! how her fingers must have ached.

All this time Mr. Lyndham kept most provokingly aloof,—a tiresome practice of his, when I happened to have any other cavalier near me.

On our way to the carriage, he joined us for a few minutes. He asked whether we had seen the view from the east turret; I answered in the negative, and, at the same time, warmly expressed my horror of going *en masse* to visit places of this kind. Mr. Lyndham immediately proposed that I should fix another day for seeing the abbey, accompanied only by cousin Dorothy, or Lady Sarah Herbert; and, at the same time, he solicited permission to act as our escort on the occasion. I was enchanted, and he repeated the proposition to Dorothy; but she answered, I thought rather coolly, that she did not believe we should stay long enough at Turretcliff to put the plan in execution: and yet it was but the other day I received my mother's permission to remain until Glenalbert's return, and there appears small prospect of this at present. I never before knew cousin Dorothy object to aught that could give pleasure to any human being, however much it might be to her own discomfort. I don't quite think she likes Mr. Lyndham,—it is cousin Dorothy's only fault; she is apt to form hasty opinions; and when once she has imbibed a prejudice, remonstrances, exhortations, per-

suasions, are not of the slightest avail,—there is no dislodging it.

As I stood by the window this evening looking at the stars, which came forth one by one from their secret haunts, and hung their "blazing cressets" in the clear frosty sky, as though they were illuminating for some rare festival, a thought struck me. Can Dorothy object to my conversing so much with Mr. Lyndham? This would be too absurd. Do we not perfectly understand each other? Was not Mr. Lyndham, from the very first moment of my introduction to him, acquainted with my engagement with Glenalbert? Cannot a man talk to a woman, but he must, of necessity, be in love with her? Surely Dorothy cannot have any fears on my account. I should be base, indeed, if I could deceive Glenalbert—if I could betray such fond, trusting love. Mr. Lyndham is neither more nor less to me than a friend, or rather an agreeable companion; we have many tastes, many sentiments in common. Is it not La Bruyère—than whom man never better knew his fellow-men, laying bare their secret failings with his keen scalpel, and then, with bitter satire, cauterizing the wounds he has made,—is it not this great master of human nature who says, "L'amitié peut bien subsister entre des gens de différens sexes pourvu que l'un ou l'autre ait le cœur préoccupé?" Why then should I not fearlessly converse with Mr. Lyndham?

Jan. 16. A letter from Lord Glenalbert; the first I have received for some time, owing to the tempestuous state of the weather. In what wretched spirits he writes! His sister still continues alarmingly ill, and he cannot leave her. This delay seems to render him very miserable. I am quite grieved for him. He bids me tell Mr. Lyndham that he hopes to make his acquaintance on his return to England. I am glad of this; we will ask him to stay with us in the country, and, by-and-by, he shall marry Margaret. How ad-

mirably will her exuberant spirits contrast with his quiet elegance! It will be like light and shadow in a fine picture.

* * * *

The paper is here very much scorched, and there are several pages destroyed. I find a fragment as follows:—

February 2nd. I have been remiss in keeping my journal. I cannot find out when last I wrote to Glenalbert, but he complains of my long silence. His sister, however, is better, and they contemplate returning; so I shall shortly be able to make my peace. I do not think I shall find him very implacable.

* * * *

Again I find a fragment, but the date is burnt off:—

That burst of patriotic feeling on *his* part, was worthy of Burke in his palmy days. Now know I what Milton means when he says, "Song charms the sense, but eloquence the soul."

* * * *

Yes there is a meeting of souls; there is something in being understood,—in finding a kindred mind, and echo of one's being, thoughts, words. Yes . . . . . .

* * * *

February 29th. Alas! I am not what I was. I dare not think. Solitude is irksome to me. I am not satisfied with myself. Dorothy, too, haunts me; she clings to me like my shadow. The "old man of the sea" was not more pertinaciously adhesive; and yet perhaps she is right. I will not pause to analyze my feelings; I will not write; I will not think.

* * * *

March 1st. "In less than a week I shall be with you, dearest Viola." . . . . The letter is yet before me . . . . I have not read further . . . . My dazzled sight refuses to aid me . . . . Why does my

heart beat thus? Why do a thousand pulses throb in agony? Why fill my eyes with tears? . . . Is this joy? Is this the feeling with which I should greet him after so long an absence . . . . him to whom but a short while since, I plighted my faith? . . . .

Friend! lover! husband! Ah, that word! How shall I learn to veil each thought, to school each glance, to feign the love I cannot feel; and whilst "dry sorrow drinks my blood," must I plunge into the vortex of dissipation, be whirled along by the giddy throng, and baffle the "lidless dragon eyes" of keen suspicion, by the ready smile and heedless jest; or, worse, shall I live to dread that my sleeping thoughts should play the traitor to my waking dreams? . . . . O dread conjunction! indissoluble union, that shall endure for days, weeks, months, for life, for ever!

Day and night never, never separated! This is the tyrant's real device; the other was but an allegory, a fable; *this is* the pulseless, livid corpse, bound to the breathing, animated being.

Alas! how heavily will the coronet press on my aching brow! . . . . Where am I? What have I been saying? . . . . I will rouse myself. Worlds should not tempt me to pierce with sorrow that noble confiding heart. . . . I will go forth, and greet him with the love he so well deserves. I will forget all that has passed since last we met . . . . It was but a ghastly hideous dream.

I am awake now.

* * * *

March 3rd. Alas! alas! why is my harp unstrung? discord in every tone! A fitting emblem of my jarring soul, where once sweet harmony did reign. Why do these books, whose varied lays were wont to chase the hours away, beguile me now no more? and why, oh why, am I so changed, that duty stands like a gaunt spectre, in my way, and with her monitory

finger points to my onward path, and still I heed her not? whilst, loud as the sound of booming waters, I hear her hoarse voice, far above the din of angry passions, waging strange conflict in my breast; and yet I madly close my eyes, my ears, and hug my fetters tighter to me.

O that I could shake off this deadly incubus, that weighs me to the ground—this leaden load, which checks my respiration!

* * * *

Here the journal finishes; the remaining pages are wanting.

CHAPTER XI.

There was a laughing devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope, withering fled, and mercy sighed farewell.

BYRON.

Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

BURNS.

MRS. SIDNEY wrote to us, urging our instant return; she wished Viola to be in London to greet the countess and her family on their arrival. From the moment of receiving this letter, I never left Viola: I indeed clung to her like her shadow. I had not then seen her journal, yet was my anxiety intensely great; above all, I dreaded a parting scene. On Mr. Lyndham I placed not the smallest reliance; I saw that he was irretrievably in love with Viola: indeed, he scarcely now strove to conceal it. I believed him selfish: I felt that, could he be but certain his

love was requited, he would burst all restraints—sacrifice Glenalbert—bring odium on Viola—and introduce sorrow and dismay into what had hitherto been an abode of peace.

The last day of our residence at Turretcliff arrived. We had travelled thither in Mr. Sidney's barouche, but our long absence had rendered it necessary that the carriage should be sent back, for Mrs. Sidney's use. We had become greatly enlightened since our residence at Turretcliff; and amongst other notable discoveries, we had learned that two ladies might travel inside a stage-coach without incurring any very fearful anathema; so it was arranged that we should return by the public vehicle, which would leave——— at six o'clock the next morning. I did not go to bed that night, in order that I might be the first to make my appearance on the morrow. I saw the boxes corded, the packages arranged, that there might be nothing left to detain me in the morning; and accordingly, at a little before five, I was in the breakfast-room; but early as I was, I found Mr. Lyndham there before me. Never shall I forget the convulsive start he gave, the withering look he cast upon me, as I entered the apartment. He turned pale, and a livid hue encircled his mouth,—that surest sign of deadly concentrated rage. I literally quailed before him; my knees tottered; I *was afraid of that man.* He did not address me, but took up a book; I followed his example. Suddenly he dashed his volume to the ground—stamped vehemently on the floor—and, as he hurriedly paced the apartment to and fro, I heard him mutter between his clenched teeth, "accursed harpy, superannuated coquette, withered old hag," and similar endearing epithets. Still I did not retreat; I feigned as though I were absorbed in my book; but infinite was my relief when the door opened, and Lady Sarah entered. This was, indeed, an unwonted exertion on her part, as we had never seen her out of her room

before mid-day. I had done injustice to Viola, for just as we were seating ourselves at the breakfast-table, we received a message from her, entreating that she might have coffee sent to her own apartment. Mr. Lyndham here suddenly rose from the table, and Lady Sarah, unobservant as she usually was, looked up, and said,

"Are you ill, Mr. Lyndham?"

"Slightly, very slightly, Madam," he replied, and then, in a species of reckless frenzy, burst forth into the old Scotch song of

> "Up in the morning 's na for me,
> Up in the morning early,
> I'd rather watch a winter's night,
> Than rise in the morning early."

There was a harsh dissonance in his voice (usually so rich and mellow) that scared me. Lady Sarah looked thunderstruck; but after a pause, she said, in a light bantering tone:

"Now, Mr. Lyndham, in return for your old song, I'll give you an old saw, 'Don't sing before breakfast, lest you weep before night;' but, indeed, you do look ill."

He threw open his coat. "I *am* ill," he cried, "stifled, oppressed; I must have air——air——" and he rushed from the apartment.

I thought this only a ruse, and that he meant to intercept Viola on her way from her own apartment to the carriage. I therefore hastily swallowed a cup of tea, and was preparing to follow him, in order that I might defeat his purpose, when Lady Sarah, laying her hand on my arm, said, "Do you know I am rather uneasy about Mr. Lyndham; he is certainly a very delightful person, but I fear, like too many geniuses, his brain is slightly singed. You understand me—a little touched here (and she pointed significantly to her forehead). He starts so violently when he is addressed; and my maid tells me, that she hears him,

at night, pacing up and down his apartment with no fairy tread. When I taxed him with this enormity, he said it was the only time that he felt inclined for study or composition; but it really must be very hurtful, thus to deprive himself of sleep."

Lady Sarah Herbert's carriage was to take us to the nearest post town; and as I now joyfully espied it driving up the avenue, I exclaimed, "We are late; I must see after our luggage."

"How very absurd," said Lady Sarah; "as if Spring or Gardner could not take care of your things. There is not such a packer as Gardner in the whole world."

"I must go in search of Viola," I exclaimed, irritated almost to madness, and flew up the stairs. I found Miss Sidney ready equipped for travelling. She was standing back in the room, so as to be herself screened from observation; but she was attentively regarding Mr. Lyndham, who was pacing the terrace to and fro; only pausing now and then to cast a hurried and impatient glance towards the windows of her apartment. She blushed deeply on perceiving me, and immediately said, "Are you ready?"

"Yes, the carriage is at the door."

"Is everything in?"

"Yes, yes; make haste,—we wait for you."

Hurriedly she descended the stairs; I followed fast. Mr. Lyndham entered at the same moment through the garden-door, so as to cross her path. She stayed not to greet him, but rushing forward, threw herself into Lady Sarah's arms—she clung about her neck—she sobbed aloud—she could not speak.

"Good-bye, my own dear Viola," said Lady Sarah, in a voice faltering from emotion; "I shall be up, if possible, for the wedding. Write to me when the day is fixed—let there be no further procrastination—delays are always dangerous: think only what you and Glenalbert have already suffered from this tedious

separation. When next I see you, you may perhaps have a greater claim on my affection; but, indeed, I feel I can never love you better than I do at this moment."

Viola disengaged herself from Lady Sarah's embrace; her face was buried in her handkerchief; she extended her hand to Mr. Lyndham, but it was without looking at him.

He seized it eagerly, and seemed about to speak, but she hurried past him. In another second she was in the carriage; she threw herself into the furthest corner, her face still concealed in the folds of her handkerchief; I sprang in after her; I never before thought I could have been so very agile.

Mr. Lyndham rushed to the opposite side of the carriage. I called to the driver, "Go on, go on; we are late." The man obeyed, and we were whirled along with all the speed with which two blood horses could carry us.

Mr. Lyndham sprang forward. "Miss Sidney—Viola—one word, only one word," I heard him exclaim. I think she heard him too, for a convulsive tremor shook her frame. The coachman checked his horses; again I exclaimed, "Go on, go on; we shall be too late for the stage," and again he cracked his whip; the mettled animals seemed to tear up the ground. For one fraction of a moment, I saw the figure of a man, hatless, breathless, with dank hair falling over his heated brow, striving, might and main, to keep pace with us: in vain!—he flagged, he tottered, and throwing in a rose through the open window, vanished from my sight.

How different was that journey home, from the one so lately undertaken on the same road, with the same companion. In silence and in sorrow, we travelled onwards. Once only did Viola appear to take cognizance of aught passing around her, and that was at the first house where we stopped to change

horses; she asked for a glass of water, and having placed the rose therein, once more threw herself back in the carriage, to indulge her own thoughts; perchance to contemplate the past with sorrow, the future with dismay. That rose was the second day fresh and blooming as at the moment it was gathered; and Viola, I thought, noted it with pleasure; for she smiled as she gazed on it; albeit, her smile showed gloomily, enlightening her pallid countenance but as the meteor enlightens the wintry sky, and, to the eye of fancy, leaves it darker than before.

Alas! I reflected, parting is the test of love; if it then ring sterling, it is the genuine ore, and not the base counterfeit.

CHAPTER XII.

Where is the maiden of mortal strain
That may match with the baron of Triermain.

SCOTT.

And all in high baronial pride,
A life both dull and dignified.

SCOTT.

MRS. SIDNEY had little time to comment on her daughter's appearance; she did just say, "I don't think the country air has given you any roses, Viola." But Mr. Sidney jocularly observed, "My dear Anne, how can you expect a young lady whose lover is away, to look otherwise than pale and thin? Ah! you see, I've hit it," he continued, as his daughter blushed deeply at these remarks; "however, Viola, your patience will not be much longer tried: they have had a remarkably quick passage, and are already at Dover; we shall see them all to-morrow."

But not even until the morrow had Viola to wait for her first interview with Lord Glenalbert; late that

evening he arrived. I had retired early, fatigued by my journey, suffering in body, but far more in mind; I was, therefore, spared this first meeting. It passed off without exciting any suspicions in Lord Glenalbert's mind; indeed, his own agitation, his joy, which as Mrs. Sidney described it, must, for one usually so calm and collected, have had the appearance of frenzy, would of itself have completely blinded him to any change in her demeanour; but from all that I could gather from Mrs. Sidney's rambling details, Viola had certainly not betrayed herself.

"Poor thing!" said her mother in conclusion, "she looked very shy; but that of course."

I think it would have been impossible to meet with any person more entirely free from guile and dissimulation than Lord Glenalbert; and, like most men of noble, generous natures, he scarcely dreamed of these failings in another; mistrust to him was a solecism in language; suspicion and jealousy were words of which he knew not the import. Thus predisposed, was it any wonder that he saw only in Viola's nervous, fluttered, embarrassed manner, augmented proof of her affection?

The countess of Glenalbert now signified her intention of waiting on us. She came, escorted only by her son. I took a huge dislike to her the minute I saw her. She had been a beauty in her youth, and might still, I suppose, be considered a very fine woman. There was far more of repelling haughtiness than of dignity in the expression of her face, and form. She was tall and angular, with a slight exaggeration of the aquiline nose, jet-black hair, here and there variegated with gray,—a lofty, yet very narrow forehead, and prominent staring eyes, that seemed to challenge homage and repect; but when she addressed her son, that haughty glance relaxed into one of unutterable tenderness. Oh! how fondly, how proudly, did she look on him, and yet it seemed to me that somewhat

of reproach and sadness mingled in her gaze, as though she would have said, "Infatuated young man! how could you thus demean yourself? Were there none in your own 'bright collateral sphere' whom you might have wedded, that you must 'abase your eyes' on this merchant's daughter?" Indeed, I had never seen Viola appear to such disadvantage. She was as *gauchè* as a *nouvelle riche* on her presentation day; stammered, and changed colour when she was addressed, and appeared to me to have even shrunk in stature. Lady Glenalbert smiled condescendingly; she took Viola's hand encouragingly, bowing her head gracefully and graciously, as a candidate for the East-India Direction on his canvass, or an apprehensive member of parliament on the eve of a threatened dissolution: she even seemed greatly inclined to patronize her. Viola Sidney to be patronized! I thought of that first meeting with Lady Sarah Herbert, and could have wept with vexation.

In Lord Glenalbert's eyes, Viola could not look ungraceful; he only felt that the two beings he loved best in the world, were now first made acquainted with each other; and, as he gazed on them alternately, his countenance beaming with joyous, animated affection, I am confident he devoutly acknowledged that he had not a wish ungratified.

There was nothing now to delay the wedding; it was expedited at the earnest request of his youngest sister, the Lady Mary Allonby, and was to take place early in the ensuing week. I now saw little, very little, of Viola; it seemed to me that she rather shunned my society, and every moment I had to spare I gave to Lady Mary, a lovely interesting young woman, in the last stage of consumption. She was of necessity left much alone, whilst her mother and sisters were ransacking all the fine shops in London for gay bonnets, dresses, &c., to do honour to the approaching nuptials. Mrs. Sidney proposed to the

countess, that I should sit with the invalid: the offer was graciously accepted. Lady Jane, and Lady Barbara, were faithful copies of their Lady-Mother, but Lady Mary resembled her brother in voice, gesture, and features. She interested me greatly; and the countess, with infinite condescension of manner, assured me, that Lady Mary had expressed herself as being much gratified by my society.

"Oh! I wish, I wish," said Lady Mary, to me one morning, "that they had fixed the wedding for this week: why might it not have been to-day, or to-morrow? A little, a very little while hence, I shall be in my grave. Glenalbert does not dream of this; he believes, as does also my poor mother, that the physicians spoke truly, when they said that my native air and the voyage home would quite restore me. I remember, too, when it was said that Italy would re-establish me; so the English doctors sent me abroad, and the foreign ones return me on their hands: they have bandied me to and fro, shuttlecock fashion," she added, in a tone of bitterness.

A violent fit of coughing here impeded her utterance; but, after a pause, she resumed:

"I must see Glenalbert married before I die; he has waited long enough for me—I would not cause him a yet longer delay;—besides, I have a horror of protracted engagements."

She broke off with a sigh so deep, so heart-felt, that I needed not to ask its cause. I endeavoured to divert her mind to other subjects, but without avail; for she said, in an unutterably sad tone:

"You do not, cannot know, my brother as I know him. I believe it would break William's heart,—I believe it would kill him, if, by any means, this marriage were broken off; I am very sure it would cloud all his future prospects—life would no longer have any charms for him. Calm and quiescent as he appears, his feelings are strong—their channels broad

and deep; and, if violently dammed up, who shall say what would be the consequences? He has a constancy and tenacity of affection, which is generally supposed peculiar to our sex."

I turned away my head; I strove to answer her, but the faculty of speech seemed denied to me. Lady Mary raised herself from the sofa on which she was reclining; she gazed on me as though she would have pierced my thoughts to their very centre; and she said, in a hoarse, hollow voice:

"Viola loves Glenalbert—does she not?—loves him as he loves her. Why do you not answer me?" she almost shrieked. "Why did she yesterday avert her head, when Glenalbert spoke of Turretcliff? Why mounted the blood in her cheek, when he asked her, in his frank, unsuspicious manner, why, at the very moment when she had nearly made him jealous of a Mr. . . . . Lyndham (was not that the name?) she should all at once have ceased to mention him? You do not answer me," she continued, with frightful energy; "you will not" . . . . .

I was striving to collect my thoughts. I was literally gasping for breath, when I saw her handkerchief applied to her mouth; in another second, it was saturated with blood.

For near two hours I remained with her, applying all the usual remedies. I sent off for the physician; the paroxysm was over before his arrival. He, of course, enjoined perfect quiet, which he found could not be obtained, until he had given his word not to mention the circumstance to her mother. He shook his head mournfully at me, as he promised compliance; intimating that hers was, as I had too truly feared, a hopeless case. He took his departure; and soon after Lady Glenalbert returned: we heard her voice on the stairs. Lady Mary grasped my hand:

"Swear to me," she said, or rather gasped, "that it

was not ambition that prompted Miss Sidney to accept Glenalbert."

"I swear it!" I said, with energy.

"I believe you," she replied. "And now promise me you will not mention what you have just witnessed to mamma, or my brother. The wedding would be again postponed; and I must, I will, see him married before I die. I ask of you no further questions concerning Viola; be generous, then, and spare me any further remonstrances."

I dreaded a return of the paroxysm. I knew that all depended on her mind being kept perfectly tranquil. I gave my word as she desired: perhaps also I secretly dreaded the consequences of the marriage being again delayed. I kissed her fervently, and withdrew as the countess entered.

The day, the important day, was now drawing rapidly near. Whatever might have been the internal struggle, I felt convinced that Viola had conquered. She was, with the exception of being rather more pensive and thoughtful (and this, of course, was regarded, by all around her, as perfectly natural to one so situated), the same as she had been before that ill-starred visit.

CHAPTER XIII.

The bride-maidens who round her thronging came,
Some with a sense of self-rebuke and shame,
Envying the unenviable, and others
Making the joy which should have been another's
Their own, by gentle sympathy: and some
Sighing to think of an unhappy home;
Some few admiring what can ever lure
Maidens to leave the heaven, serene and pure,
Of parents' smiles for life's great cheat; a thing
Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining.

SHELLEY.

Di chi mi fido, guardami Dio,
Di chi non mi fido mi guardero io.

ITALIAN PROVERB.

Defend me from my friends!

COMMON SAYING.

CHAIRS, tables, sofas, were covered; the floor was strewed; every nook and cranny of that large apartment were filled with silks, satins, laces, blondes; with rarest porcelain, whose enamelled dyes might have challenged the floral goddess to produce their peers; with ormolu clocks, that did everything but "give a tongue to time;" with alabaster vases, in which a Naiad might have laved her fairy limbs.

The rarest bijouterie, the brightest gems, sparkled amidst that glittering heap. It seemed as though Howel, Harding, Hamlet

"O words of fear,
Unpleasing to a husband's ear,"

had poured forth their tributary stores into that vast emporium. With garments carefully folded round them, lest their voluminous folds, hanging sleeves, and pendent drapery, should get entangled amid those "fields of *waste*," a cluster of ladies were dilating, commenting, admiring, in every varied tone of demonstrative female eloquence: there was a din and clatter of tongues, to which the chattering of a whole generation of parrots, or entire forest of Brazilian monkeys, would have been low and inaudible.

At length, superlatives were exhausted—"the force of *flattery* could no further go;" admiration was at a discount; encomiums a mere drug in the market; and then there ensued the ceremony of leave-taking; the conclave was dissolved; and away they went, to praise or blame, sympathize with, or envy (as the gall or chyle of their animal nature predominated), the lady for whose especial benefit all these good gifts were in store, winding up their discourse, with the consolitary ejaculation, that "marriages are made in heaven."

This heterogeneous group was succeeded by two young ladies, who, in virtue of the important official situation they were to hold on the morrow, had been promised a private view of the exhibition; where, undisturbed by the mixed multitude, they might be carping and critical to their hearts' content, after the approved fashion of most *dilettanti*, and admirers of the fine arts. Miss Brookes and Miss Page were ushered in by Marables, the priestess of the temple; and after a "Dearest Viola, how are you?" addressed to Miss Sidney, who was seated on a sofa at the remotest corner from the scene of action, they proceeded to an elaborate survey of the *trousseau*. Miss Brookes always reminded me of a precipice, being rough, angular, rugged, and perpendicular; she was, too, that unnatural compound, a sentimental blue, one of those young ladies in whose mouth hydrogen, and

hydrophylacia, antagonist principles, and discriminative motion, are familiar as household words; who plunge deeply into political economy, meander through the mazes of metaphysics, discuss the poor-laws unblushingly through all their manifold clauses; who use "words of learned length and thundering sound," quote Latin as trippingly as an usher at a preparatory school, and prate of Byron the bewitching, and Shelley the soul-subduing, whether or not for the sake of "apt alliteration" it would be invidious to inquire.

In accordance with her father's wish, Viola had asked Miss Brookes to fill the honourable and honorary situation of bride-maid. Mr. Sidney deemed it would be only paying a fitting compliment to Mr. Brookes, who was the senior partner in the firm. Viola had earnestly entreated that I would make one of the corps of attendant nymphs; but I felt that, at my age, such a proceeding would be truly ridiculous; and, although not convinced, she yielded at length to my arguments. Lady Jane and Lady Barbara were, at their brother's request, pressed into the service;—I am sure they would have refused, could they have furnished themselves with any reasonable excuse.

By the way, it is matter of marvel to me, that, in these days of clipping and paring, that same official sinecure of bride-maid should not be abolished by act of parliament; but then, to be sure, there is no fee or bountith thereunto appertaining, so I suppose the wise ones are content to let it alone.

"Mais, revenons à nos moutons." Miss Brookes, then, after bestowing divers gratuitous observations on the unclassical taste displayed in the arrangement of the dresses, &c., which made Marables's blood boil with indignation, sat down to examine a costly sapphire, which had been tastefully mounted in the form of a brooch, and which she now, with affectionate solicitude, entreated Viola never to wear; assuring her that it contained a vast quantity of expansive fluid,

which would infallibly cause it to explode, and the consequences might be most alarming. This she proceeded to demonstrate on philosophical principles, summing up her argument with the notable observation, that the gem was only fit for a cabinet of curiosities.—N.B. Miss Brookes's collection of minerals, spars, shells, butterflies, moths, stuffed birds and beasts, reptiles and rubbish, was much vaunted amongst her especial coterie.

Miss Page, in the meanwhile, with girlish delight, was rhapsodizing on each successive article that Marables brought for her inspection. "Oh, what a love of a dress! what a fascinating cloak! what an irresistible bonnet!" she exclaimed, as dresses, cloaks, and bonnets were pointed out by Marables, and expatiated on, much in the same style as you may hear a connoisseur in painting dilate on a Rubens, a Raphael, or a Rembrandt. "Now, ladies, a little more to the left, and the light will fall on this gros-de-Naples." She held it aloft—she came near—she fell back—she extended it at arm's length. "Look at the exquisite bloom on the peach; how delicately the ground-colour is relieved by being shot with white! See the perfect finish of the sleeve,—not one puff too many. The folds, likewise,—how gracefully they are arranged!—one could swear to the touch of Madame Lamode all the world over." The gros-de-Naples received its due meed of praise, when both the young ladies exclaimed simultaneously:

"But where is *the* dress, Viola? and are you to be married in a bonnet or a veil?"

"Don't you hear us, Viola?" cried the irrepressibly voluble Miss Page; and, as she spoke, she gave her one of those relentless pushes which sprightly young ladies so often indulge in.

There is an irresistible eloquence in those orators who suit the action to the word, which very seldom fails to produce a *striking effect* and *powerful sensation;* apparently it had its due effect upon Miss

Sidney, who was, at the moment, intently absorbed in the interesting process of sorting white kid gloves, small "by degrees, and beautifully less." She started from her seat in nervous trepidation, whereupon Miss Page exclaimed:

"Why, my dear, you could not have jumped higher, had I been Fieschi, and the *machine infernale;*"* and having given utterance to this brilliant sally, she burst into an astounding fit of laughter, which fell upon the tympanum of my ear like the startling report from a large piece of ordnance; and, as the laugh died away, it resembled the echoes of the same engine when they are reverberated from the distant hills.

"Now you are fairly awake, my dear," continued Miss Page, "I ask you once more whether you marry in a veil or a bonnet?"

"In a bonnet, I believe," absently replied Viola.

"You *believe*," echoed Miss Page; "now as if that were not pure affectation,—as if you had not been putting it on and off the whole morning, manœuvring the feathers, and torturing the flowers, to make them fall and droop gracefully; but come, Marables, produce the bonnet."

"Miss Sidney marries in a veil, ma'am," said Marables in a mincing tone. "I do not know what Miss Viola means; for when *missus* asked Lord Glenalbert which he would prefer (as Miss Sidney always declared she had not a choice), his lordship directly fixed on the veil, as he said that in Miss Sidney's dark hair it would ——"

"Oh, of course," snappishly interrupted Miss Brookes; "we can imagine all the pretty things Lord Glenalbert would say on the occasion; but be so good as to show us the veil."

Marables triumphantly displayed it; she had evidently reserved it, as being, in her estimation, the *chef-d'œuvre* of the *trousseau*, she had determined on

* This is clearly an anachronism.—Ed.

exhibiting it last of all. And now factions ran high, as to the relative merits of the rich blond, standing out like some rare piece of basso-rilievo; of the delicate point-lace, resembling the finest specimens of filagree; or the quaint tesselated Honiton. They were still discussing this complex subject, when the door again opened, and in swam, tottered, or shuffled, as nature or their dancing-masters had decreed, a bevy of elderly ladies, headed by Mrs. Sidney, who vainly endeavoured to assume an air of *nonchalance*, of utter contempt for all the gay paraphernalia around her, as she exclaimed, in answer to the several queries of her contemporaries:

"Oh, that necklace is a gift from the Lady Sarah Herbert, aunt to Lord Glenalbert; and that superb tiara came quite unexpectedly last night from the countess, his mother; the dowager countess as she will be to-morrow. Poor thing! that word dowager is a terrible *memento mori!*" and Mrs. Sidney laughed somewhat affectedly.

"Ah, Viola!" cried Miss Brookes, "take care; for if ever I see you with that tiara in your hair, Danton, Marat, Robespierre, will prove but faint types of me. I shall infallibly decapitate you."

Miss Sidney *tried* to smile.

"And who is the donor of this hair bracelet?" asked the mamma of the sentimental blue; "the clasp is quite massive; ah, mosaic gold, I perceive; how well they do imitate the real ore! Positively, if it were not a *little* too yellow, and somewhat too heavy, one would never detect the imposition."

Mrs. Sidney slightly coloured, and, addressing her daughter, said, "Viola, you really ought not to have placed this worthless bauble amongst all these valuable gems."

"But," Viola replied, "it is a gift from cousin Dorothy, and I prize it more than ——. I mean, I prize it greatly."

Mrs. Brookes looked steadfastly at Viola, shrugged her shoulders, arched her eyebrows very significantly, as though she would have said, "That's your cue, is it?"

I had been all this time stitching away most zealously, as I was furbishing up my little wardrobe, preparatory to joining Viola at her country seat. She now called me to her,—an invariable practice this of hers, whenever she thought I had been treated insolently. I was crossing the room, when Mrs. Brookes, feigning as though she had not before perceived me, said:

"Dear me, I beg your pardon, Miss Dorothy; I am sure I should not have spoken thus of the bracelet, had I known it to be your gift; indeed, upon nearer inspection, I think the device quite perfect: hands firmly clasped, and encircled by a ring, the symbol of eternity; how very *sentimental!* And this too is your hair, I suppose; actually not one grey in the whole plait,—admirable!"

I did not reply; I did not even blush, a sure sign with me that I did not feel. Viola had insisted on having my hair in a bracelet; the plaiting and the mosaic clasp had been as much as I could afford. I had tried hard to compass a gold ornament, but I found it would be impossible, without incurring a debt which would have cost me many a sleepless night. I therefore, although it was a real act of self-denial, forbore to make the purchase; and when I presented the bracelet to Viola, I frankly told her that the clasp was not real. But now that Mrs. Brookes had "given tongue," the whole pack seemed to have got on a new scent; and they rushed upon me, as though they were resolved to be in at the death. But I did not stand at bay; I resigned myself quietly to my fate.

Mrs. Page left the critical survey of a dress, which Madame Lamode had assured us, "Milédie Glenalbert aurait l'honneur inouï d'introduire parmi les dames

Anglaises;" and which, as I observed that, whenever Marables's eye was averted, Mrs. Page was measuring with mathematical precision, I shrewdly suspected she meant, in milliner's phrase, to "carry in her eye;" she now, however, abandoned her occupation, and, advancing to me, said:

"So you are to live with Miss Sidney,—I mean with Lady Glenalbert?"

I bowed my head.

"And a very nice arrangement it is," she continued: "in a large establishment it is so highly necessary to have a trustworthy person. The servants are so given to peculation, that it is quite indispensable to have some one placed over them on whom we can implicitly rely."

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Brookes; "and Miss Sidney will find it so different from anything she has been accustomed to, she will be at first, I fear, quite bewildered; but, my dear Mrs. Sidney, what will you do without your cousin? (a marked emphasis on the last word), you will lose your right hand;" then, lowering her voice, "if you now think it necessary to have a housekeeper, mine is about to leave; I can safely recommend her."

That Viola did not hear this I was certain; her eyes were on the ground, her hands clasped, her brow contracted, her whole attitude that of a person lost in reverie; indeed, had it not been for her evident abstraction, I am confident that neither Mrs. Brookes nor Mrs. Page would have ventured so far; a look from her would have annihilated them.

For my own part, it may or may not be credited, but far from being hurt, I was amused; only I was quite sorry to see Mrs. Sidney look so thoroughly disconcerted. She now, in parliamentary phrase, "rose to explain;" when Mrs. Brookes, seeing that at least one of her arrows had not fallen short of the mark, exclaimed:

"I have an infinity of things to do. Come, Emily; I really could stay all day, looking at this tempting bijouterie, but that impracticably stupid dress-maker has sent Emily's dress trimmed with white instead of blue; and that will never do, as it might give rise to the same *contretemps* that occurred at poor Miss Pringle's wedding. If you do not know the story, Mrs. Sidney, I will tell it you another time, as I cannot stay now. Come along, Emily."

Mrs. Sidney well knew the story, as did every one there present: she knew that when in the wonted bustle and perplexity attendant on these bewildering casualties, the ladies stood swarming together like a cluster of bees round the queen of the hive, the clerk made a very pardonable mistake in slightly motioning the young and lovely bridemaid to approach the altar, and passed over the heroine of the day, who had seen some forty summers, and who, if she had ever enjoyed beauty's "high estaste," had now forfeited all claims to the possession. But here, at least, the shaft was most unskilfully aimed; for as Mrs. Sidney gazed on her surpassingly beautiful child, she could unfeignedly smile at the petty malice that dictated the allusion. Mrs. Brookes's departure was the signal for a general dissolution of the meeting, and Mrs. Sidney was left alone with her daughter and myself.

"My dear Viola, how pale and *triste* you look," said her mother, "but it is *so* natural; how forcibly it recalls to me my own wedding day!" and Mrs. Sidney looked sentimental, as all elderly ladies think it incumbent on them to do when speaking of "the happiest day of their lives:" "But you, dear Viola," continued her mother, "marry under such far brighter auspices,—I am sure I do not mean to complain,—I can only hope that you and Lord Glenalbert will be as happy throughout your married life as your father and I have ever been,—but then at first we were sadly limited,

—we had a great deal to struggle with,—I had no carriage, and only one man servant, whilst you, Viola, will have rank, wealth, and station; indeed my most sanguine expectations have been more than realized; —you marry a man of pleasing, if not handsome exterior, extremely well informed,—although perhaps not endowed with brilliant talents; most highly principled, and devotedly attached to you. What earthly good can you desire more?"

Viola did not speak; she raised her head, and it seemed as though the "climbing sorrow,"—*hysterica passio*, as poor Lear has it, were rising in her throat; but by a violent effort she subdued it, and articulated the single word "Mother!"

"Ah, those vile hysterics! my dear Viola do take some sal volatile. For heaven's sake do not have them to-morrow, nothing is so bad as a *scena*; besides, the man is so apt to take it as a bad compliment to himself. And now, my love," continued Mrs. Sidney, looking round the apartment, "you have I think everything you want; do you know, your *trousseau* has cost your father five hundred pounds, that is, including your new harp?"

"Papa is very kind," said Viola.

"Nay, my dear, you deserve it all; you have ever been a good, obedient, affectionate child. It was only last night your father said to me, that from the hour of your birth you had never caused him a moment's pain or sorrow. This is very gratifying, is it not? When he gives you his parting blessing to-morrow, Viola, you will think of this. A father's blessing is indeed most holy!"

Viola wept.

"Come, come, my child, this will never do," said Mrs. Sidney; "we will talk of other things. I must not, however, forget to tell you how liberally Lord Glenalbert has behaved as to the settlements."

"Oh, spare me the details of the ledger-book, mother! the debtor and creditor account, the pounds, shillings, and pence."

"Well, my dear Viola," rejoined Mrs. Sidney, somewhat bitterly, "I know you have the true heroine-like contempt for filthy lucre; yet believe me it is always persons of your visionary, romantic temperament to whom those mundane things gold and silver are most necessary; they being ever the least fitted to wrestle with the wants and privations of this 'work-day world.' But I think you will be pleased to hear that Lord Glenalbert has refused to receive any fortune with you; and has insisted that the marriage portion your father destined for you should be given to your sisters. This is a trait in your own line, is it not, dear Viola? But why do you put your hand to your head? I fear it aches; go and lie down, my child, till dinner-time." Mrs. Sidney affectionately embraced her daughter and left the apartment.

Meanwhile Mrs. Page and Mrs. Brookes, with their respective daughters, had joined company on their route homewards, that they might discuss the merits and demerits of the *trousseau*.

"Do you know, mamma," observed Helen Page, "I do not think Viola Sidney is happy."

"What nonsense! my dear Miss Helen," replied Mrs. Brookes; "you are so unsophisticated;—a perfect child of nature; did you not see that look of abstraction was put on for the occasion? It was not her cue to appear interested in all that was going on. What to her are the pomps and vanities of the world?"

"Nay, mamma," said Miss Brookes, "perchance there may be a prior attachment; perchance

> "She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Prey on her damask cheek."

"Oh, what pretty lines!" exclaimed Miss Page; "are they your own? I never heard them before."

With a look of ineffable contempt, Miss Brookes replied, "My own! why, child, they are our immortal bard's."

"You don't say so," rejoined Miss Page in a bantering tone; for very sprightly young ladies luxuriate in this species of quizzing.

Nothing daunted, Miss Brookes went on in a moralizing strain: "Truly has it been observed, 'L'on n'aime bien qu'une seule fois; c'est la première.'"

"Nonsense, Emily," exclaimed her mother, "there is no such thing as first love."

To this somewhat Milesian dictum Mrs. Page assented, by giving a most oracular Lord Burleigh nod of the head, and Miss Page exclaimed: "Well, I am sure, the sight of those sweet dresses, and those dear emeralds, would be enough to cure a thousand first loves. I would marry my grandfather in defiance of canon, civil, or ecclesiastical law, only to possess that diamond spray; for in these cases, you know, le *présent* fait oublier le *futur*."

"Don't rattle on so, Helen," cried Mrs. Page; "you talk egregious folly."

To this maternal rebuke, Miss Page was about to make rather an unfilial retort, for it is an incontrovertible fact, that very frolicsome damsels are not always renowned for invincible good humour, especially in the domestic circle; but having arrived at a point where their respective routes diverged, the ladies separated; not, however, before Miss Brookes had tenderly whispered in Miss Page's ear, "Now mind, Helen, you look your very best to-morrow, or I will never forgive you."

"Well now, that is kind," replied Miss Page, in her most *naïve* manner; "that is really generous, for as we are to be dressed alike, it might provoke in-

vidious comparisons; good-bye, dear," and she ran after her mother.*

CHAPTER XIV.

——It seemed as if her breast
Had hoarded energies till then suppress'd,
Almost with pain, and bursting from constraint,
And finding first that hour their pathway free,
Could a rose brave the storm, such might her emblem be.

MRS. HEMANS.

Thrice he essay'd, and thrice, in spite of scorn,
Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth; at last
Words, interwove with sighs, found out their way.

MILTON.

FOR a few minutes after Mrs. Sidney left the apartment, Viola remained with her eyes bent on vacancy; then taking up a casket from a table near her, she repaired to a small apartment which had been long since appropriated to her use. It had been carefully, I might say elegantly, fitted up: a few choice paintings adorned the walls, a profusion of richly-bound books lay scattered about the tables, and a variety of fragrant plants were tastefully arranged in the embrasures of the windows. Here were Viola and I accustomed to spend our mornings, and here did I now accompany her, for I felt that she must not be left alone. Viola seated herself at a table, and placing the casket before her, buried her face in her hands; but those hands were too small to conceal the features, which they only shaded, and the swollen veins of the temple, and the convulsive tremor of the lips, told their tale of mental anguish. Suddenly she opened the

* Lest I should be supposed to possess the gift of ubiquity, I must observe, that this colloquy was repeated to me verbatim by Miss Page some time after it took place, and, to the credit of her sincerity be it spoken, she did not even attempt to conceal her own little ebullition of temper.—NOTE BY DOROTHY.

casket, and drew from it a small book, which had the word "Journal" inscribed on the back. She hastily glanced her eye over its pages, and tearing them into fragments, threw them on the fire.* She next took a withered rose and a letter from the casket; "I must no longer keep these," she exclaimed; "to-day I am weak and frail, but to-morrow I should be culpable." I knew that these words were not addressed to me, they were but the outpourings of an over-fraught heart. After a pause, she resumed, "Why, why did he write? Why did he seek to awake passions subdued, or which at least lay dormant? He asks me, if I remember that parting hour? Alas! too well I remember it! Would that I had told all to my mother—but it is too late now; I cannot, dare not, recede!" And again she bowed her head upon her hands: she did not weep, for the anguish of her soul was too deep to find its vent in tears. A low tap was heard at the door, and doubtless imagining, as I did, that it was only the children escaped for the nonce from the "peine forte et dure" of the school-room, she bid them enter, without, however, moving her position. But instead of the childish treble, it was the deep tones of Lord Glenalbert that greeted her. She started violently, and instinctively she seized the letter, and crushed it in her hand. Lord Glenalbert did not see this movement on her part, for he was busily employed in unfastening the string of a small packet which he

* It was a great proof of Miss Sidney's pre-occupation of mind, that she threw the pages so carelessly on the fire, that many fell into the grate only half destroyed, very much scorched, yet still legible. It was not until the next morning that I perceived them, when, after a sleepless night, I descended to the boudoir just in time to rescue them from the housemaid. I kept them by me, as I thought the time might come when Viola would be glad to find them again. She afterwards gave me permission to read them, and, at the same time, allowed me to retain them in my possession.—NOTE BY COUSIN DOROTHY.

held. I was preparing to leave the room, but Viola turned her large dark eyes upon me with such an imploring look, that I paused, and Lord Glenalbert said, "Do not go, cousin Dorothy—you must stay and time me—I am on my parole—restricted to five minutes,—it was only on this condition, that Mrs. Sidney would allow me to come here; she is uneasy about your headache, Viola."

"I am better than when my mother left me," languidly replied Viola.

"See," he continued, "that faithless jeweller has at length sent home the necklace. I think it is in keeping with the other ornaments, and the set will now be complete."

"It is very beautiful," she replied, without even raising her eyes.

"Well," he answered, laughing, "that *is* paying a very high compliment to my judgment, thus taking the merits of the jewels upon trust, for you have not even opened the case."

Mechanically she touched the spring, and gazing abstractedly upon the gems, she repeated, "They are very beautiful."

"Nay, Viola," he said, in a disappointed tone, "perhaps there is some fault. I think you are not pleased with it: if so, it can yet be altered."

Recollecting herself, she replied, with energy, "Indeed, I think it perfect. In everything, Lord Glenalbert, you have been most kind, most liberal. My mother just now mentioned to me your generous disposal of my fortune, which I——" But he interrupted her.

"Surely, Viola," he exclaimed, "there needed not this to convince you how perfectly disinterested is my affection—how entirely I love you for yourself alone. But even I, Viola, who have ever had a morbid fear of being sought for adventitious gifts and qualities, that might equally have been the portion of the basest of my kind,—I who have shunned

manœuvring mamamas, and conversational papas, like the pestilence,—I who have escaped by a miracle from the snares of those nimble tacticians, the flirts of three seasons,—I who have avoided adhesive younger brothers, and sociable elder ones, by arts of policy that would have done honour to a Machiavel,—even I have an intense conviction that not the mines of Golconda, nor all the kingdoms of the earth (had they been mine to bestow), would have influenced you one iota in my favour, had I not obtained the proud possession of your love."

The mantling blood spread like a glory over cheek, and neck, and brow, as Viola bent her head beneath his admiring gaze; but Lord Glenalbert dreamed not of the cause of that blush, as taking up the rose he said, "This *is* kind, Viola; have you indeed kept this withered, faded flower? How well I remember the evening I gave it you;—but no, that was a moss rose, for I have not forgotten almost offending you, by laughing at your romantic allusions to the thorns which——"

He stopped; for Viola, laying her hand upon his arm, said, "*That rose was not given to me by you,* Glenalbert."

"Well, do not speak in such a very solemn tone, my little Viola; indeed, I had no right to expect you would have done anything half so silly. Shall I confess it? I have not so much as a torn glove, or half a sandal of your shoe, in my possession; I have not even written a sonnet to your eyebrow; and, alas, for the climax, I have never asked for a lock of your hair. I fear me I have been but an indifferent lover; yet, dearest Viola, I dare promise that you shall find in me a devoted husband." He rose to leave the apartment, saying, "I dare not stay longer; I have already broken my promise to your mother."

His hand was on the lock of the door, when Viola exclaimed, "William!—Lord Glenalbert!" Her voice in any tone, in any key, would have had power

to stay him; but now it was so changed, there was something so hollow, so breathless in the sound, that he stood transfixed. "I say, Glenalbert, *that rose—this letter—were not from you!*" Then rushing forward, she flung herself at his feet; "Lord Glenalbert, I cannot, I dare not, be your wife."

"You cannot be my wife, Viola! You are mad—you mock me—but it is a fearful jest;—unsay those words."

"No, no, no, I am not mad—I do not jest. I dare not, in the sight of God and man, pronounce my marriage vow to-morrow. I dare not promise forsaking all others to keep only unto you. My tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth—my lips would refuse to give utterance to that fell lie. Hate me, Lord Glenalbert, yet you cannot hate me more than I hate myself. Despise me, but your scorn cannot equal the withering contempt that I feel for my own base, treacherous deed,—yet, yet, I cannot be your wife. Speak to me, Glenalbert—do not gaze on me so; your eyes are wild—your lips are bloodless. I say, do not gaze at me so—curse me if you will, but speak, oh speak!"

A convulsive tremor had seized him;—he appeared to writhe as though enduring some racking agony;—a grey light, like the precursor of death, overspread his face;—he staggered. Viola sprang from the ground—she rushed towards him; instinctively she seized his arm. The movement roused him, for he hurled her from him with a force that would have sent her to the ground, but that a sofa near her intercepted the fall. "Touch me not," he exclaimed in a voice of thunder; and he recoiled from her grasp as though a venomous reptile had left its slimy poison on him. "You cannot be my wife, Viola,—you dare not take your marriage vow! Think you not that in the sight of heaven you *are* my wife? To a pure mind, vows pronounced at the altar could scarcely be more sacred than those with which you have already plighted your faith. Yes, at that moment in which you owned your

love, you became my wife; and now, now are you faithless—forsworn!"

She remained with her face buried in the cushions of the sofa, and, after a pause, he continued in a faltering voice, "Had you told me this a few months since, I should have felt it—assuredly I should have felt it,—but it would not have unnerved me thus;—it would not have blasted my every future prospect;—it would not have crushed me to the earth. Oh, was it kindly done to wait until the last moment ere you dashed the cup from my lips? I am not a deliberate, selfish, cold-blooded villain, Viola; and had you told me this in the commencement of our acquaintance, it would have sufficed. I then had borne it like a man,—but now, now . . . ." and he hid his face in his hands, and sobbed aloud."

Oh, it is a fearful thing to see a man weep!

"Hear me, Lord Glenalbert," she said, and again she threw herself at his feet; but sternly he raised her, and she stood before him.

"I call heaven to witness," exclaimed Viola, "that it was not until to-day I knew the state of my heart. I thought I had conquered I believed I had ceased to think of him—but this letter, this fatal letter, has undeceived me;—it has torn the veil from my heart, the film from my eyes;—this letter has recalled scenes and places once too dear—thoughts and emotions I vainly dreamed were buried. But now, even now, I will promise you to forget him, and all connected with him—only give me a little time—delay our marriage but a while, and I will promise to be to you all that . . . . . a faithful wife should prove."

"I thank you," he said bitterly; "you would come forth as a victim, decked and adorned for the sacrifice. You would immolate yourself upon the altar of my self-love; and you would strive to fulfil your duty, until your heart broke, or until . . . Yes," he continued, with fearful energy, "I might have lived to suffer even worse than this; I might have lived

to see thee one whom women should presume to look coldly on, and men should *dare* to compassionate. I might have lived to see thee scorned, misprized, dishonoured."

Her cheeks were alternately pale as monumental marble, and crimson with the burning blush of shame; but with forced calmness, she said, "Go on, go on. I am sunk so low, that the most degraded of my sex is in your eyes sinless, when compared with such a thing as I."

But he continued without heeding her: "No, heaven is my witness I could not have borne to see thee frail and fallen. I could not have lived to know that vice had left its scathing brand on that pure lofty brow."

"Be merciful, Lord Glenalbert," she exclaimed, in a half-suffocated voice, "Spare me; oh, spare me!"

But there needed not this appeal. Already did Lord Glenalbert seem to repent having given utterance to those words of insult: already did he appear to be stricken with the thought, which no experience, it should seem, can crush in man, that loveliness, such as Viola's, is the express image of all purity—that shame could never rest upon that stainless brow—for a change came o'er his countenance. A few moments only, and the look of mingled scorn and agony had passed; and there was far more of sorrow than reproach in the long and earnest gaze he bent upon her, as in a low, unmodulated tone, in which all passion seemed buried, he said, "And now, what do I here? Farewell, Viola. To-night I leave England. Even yet I am not prepared to see you the wife of another; —do you not smile at my weakness?"

"I shall never be *his* wife," answered Viola. "I know full well, that no earthly power could ever have prevailed with my father to give his consent to that union now, now least of all. It was not then, with the hope of marrying another, that I have thus spoken; but only that I could not give to one so generous,

so confiding, a divided love,—to you, Glenalbert, who deserve (if ever man deserved) the purest, tenderest love that ever warmed a woman's heart; and you will have it, Lord Glenalbert, whilst I ——I——."

The door opened, and in burst the two younger girls, very gaily attired.

"Glenalbert," exclaimed Margaret (for she thought it *fine* not to give her future brother-in-law his title), "these are the frocks we are to wear to-morrow; do you not think them pretty? Marables says you will be so taken up with Viola to-morrow that you will have no time to look at us, so you must just give us your opinion now."

Whilst she was speaking, little Lucy (who, from the strong likeness she bore to Viola, had always been Lord Glenalbert's favourite) crept up to him, and sliding her little hand into his, looked steadfastly in his face; but she shrunk from him (there is something appalling in grief like his, which can awe even the heedless spirit of childhood), and approaching her sister, she said, "Come along, Margaret: do you not see Glenalbert does not want us now?"

But Margaret was one of those invulnerable young ladies whom nothing can daunt, and finding she could not obtain an answer from Glenalbert, she approached her eldest sister, saying, "Well, Viola, how do you like our dresses? Do they fit well? They will look better when we have on our white satin shoes; but Marables was in one of her obstinate fits, and she would not let us wear them, for fear of soiling them, although, I am sure, mounting the church-steps to-morrow, will do that fast enough,—now won't it Viola?"

"Margaret, do not tease your sister," said Lord Glenalbert, in a voice so stern, that it sent her out of the room with a hop, skip, and a jump, as she afterwards graphically said, when describing the scene to Marables; and little Lucy, after flinging her arms about my neck, and bidding me not cry so bitterly, followed her sister, bathed in tears.

The dinner-bell rang.

"The dinner-bell!" almost shrieked Viola. "What shall I do?"

"I suppose you will wish to see your parents alone," said Lord Glenalbert; "once more, therefore, I bid you farewell, you will best make my excuses to your father."

"Alas, I dare not," she replied.

Her terror was so real, so evident, that he said, in a softened tone:

"If, by staying awhile, I can afford you any relief—if, by saying that we have, by mutual consent, cancelled our engagement, I can screen you from any share of the odium that must now, I fear, attach to you, I will do so, Viola; for Heaven is my witness, I shall speak but the truth; worlds should not tempt me now to link my fate with yours."

"Dinner!" screamed Mr. Sidney, with a seventy horse power of lungs.

"Oh, do not leave me!"—Viola looked the words, although she did not give utterance to them. They descended the stairs. For the first time since he had entered that house, Lord Glenalbert offered not his arm to Viola, although she trembled so violently, that she was forced to cling to the balustrade for support. I advanced to her aid, but my legs tottered, my head swam, and it was with difficulty I kept myself from sinking on the stairs.

"Oh, this love! this love!" said Mr. Sidney, as one by one we entered the dining-room; "well, I do not think I was ever so far gone as to forget my dinner; but to-morrow, thank goodness, we shall have done with it all."

He spoke good humouredly; and it proved how well satisfied he was with what he considered the present aspect of affairs; for, to neglect the dinner hour was, in Mr. Sidney's estimation (as in that of most elderly gentlemen), regarded as an act of moral turpitude. We placed ourselves at table; but, notwithstanding many desultory efforts to keep up something like a

conversation, it flagged most woefully; and a dead and chilling silence fell on all around, broken only by the incessant play of a knife and fork, wielded by Dick Sidney, who, like Sir Andrew, was, "a great eater of beef," although, with that same sapient knight, he might have found that it somewhat "harmed the wit." With the exception of Viola, he was the only one of the young people at table; for Margaret and Lucy dined early with Miss Sharpe, and James Sidney was on the continent, pursuing his commercial studies, and being initiated into all the technicalities of tonnage, and demurrage, agio, tariffs, &c. &c.

To my excited nerves the silence became every moment more and more intolerable; I felt, at each instant, that the storm was about to burst over our devoted heads. Viola and Lord Glenalbert were absorbed in their secret griefs; and Mrs. Sidney, happy as she was in her daughter's brilliant prospects, still felt as every mother must feel when the much-loved child is about to leave the home of her youth, and go among strangers, who may, perhaps, look coldly on her. Will her husband's mother greet her as her own mother would have done? Will her husband's sisters crowd round her with the fond embrace, the warm love, which her own, own sisters would have lavished? Can these be unto her as the playmates of her infancy—the companions of her childhood—the friends of her youth? But there is another thought which presses on the fond mother's heart, and weighs her spirit in the dust. She may yet be the friend, but she can no longer be the counsellor of her daughter. She may yet smile with her in joy; but she can no longer sorrow with her in grief. She may see the cheek grow pale with weeping, and with watching, and the lustre of the bright eye fade; but unasked, unsought, she dares not proffer sympathy, or solace, lest she should widen the breach she is desirous to heal,—lest the *daughter* should divulge, what the *wife* would fain conceal.

"Come, come," said Mr. Sidney, "this will never

do; why, Viola, you and Glenalbert look, for all the world, like a new-married couple, who have just forfeited all claim to the flitch of bacon: a quarrel between lovers is——."

"Amantium iræ amoris integratio est," shouted forth Dick Sidney, who was going through the Latin grammar for the fourth time; and, being blessed with one of those perforated capacities, which let out knowledge with far greater velocity than they receive it, had contrived, with laudable ingenuity, to know rather less of its contents than when they were first drummed into him.

"Ah, ah, very good!" said Mr. Sidney, who had long forgotten the "small Latin and less Greek" that he once possessed: "very good indeed, my boy, translate for the benefit of the ladies."

Dick was elated; and boldly gave forth what is usually called a very spirited version, which as I take it, is something as little like the original, as can well be conceived.

"Bravo, Dick," said his father; "the author is——; always name your author."

The boy looked posed, but quickly recovered himself; and thinking, I suppose, that one author was as good as another, replied unflinchingly:

"Virgil, father."

"Extremely well, Dick," rejoined Mr. Sidney; "you have made great progress the last half. I had no idea you were so far advanced—in Virgil, eh! 'pon my word, this is as it should be. You shall stay a few days after the wedding, Dick, instead of going back immediately."

The boy's eyes glistened.

"May I cut up the cake that is to be sent out? Viola, may I?—as it is your cake, I suppose I must ask your permission."

Viola looked at him imploringly; but her mother most opportunely came to her relief, by saying:

"The confectioner will arrange all that, Dick."

"What, shan't we have any cake at home? How mean!" cried the boy. "Viola, do ask," he whispered "for a cake for us; as it is your wedding, they won't refuse you. Do, Viola, now—you were always a good-natured girl."

"Don't teaze me, Dick," said Viola, rather impatiently.

"Whew!"—and Dick gave a prolonged whistle; "have a care, 'there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip:' if you don't check that same temper of yours, Lord Glenalbert may yet cry off."

"Dick, be quiet; don't annoy your sister," said Lord Glenalbert, in a low tone, "or I'll inform about the Latin grammar."

The boy was effectually silenced; and, soon after, Mrs. Sidney rose from table, saying:

"Viola, my dear, come and look at the favours; I think them quite beautiful."

We left the room; Viola flew past her mother, and took refuge in her own apartment; thither I followed her. Breathless she sat awaiting the summons, for she felt that Lord Glenalbert must now speak to her father. Viola remained with her face buried in my lap; her heart beat almost audibly; mine fluttered like a bird caught in the fowler's snare. The ticking of the small time-piece fell on my ear, with the appalling distinctness of the monitory bell, as it summons the despairing criminal to the last dread scene. The moon looked in at the windows of our apartment; and as she bent her pure, earnest gaze upon us, she seemed to marvel that earthly passions, and earthly sorrows, had power thus to convulse the children of her sister planet. It appeared to me that a cycle of years had revolved during that short period.

"Viola!" cried Mr. Sidney, from the bottom of the stairs, in a voice so loud, that it might have aroused the seven sleepers. Viola moved not from the ground, but she flung her arms tighter round me.

"Master calls;" said Marables, popping in her well-trimmed cap at the door; for, as she afterwards observed, "from Miss Margaret's anecdote, and master's angry voice, she fancied something was going wrong, and she thought Miss Sidney might perhaps be in want of her services."

"Viola," again shouted Mr. Sidney, "where are you?"

But Marables's entrance had, for an instant, diverted Viola's thoughts, and she now raised her head, and drawing up her figure to its full height, traversed the apartment with firm step, as one whose mind was made up to endure the worst. She gave me her arm, nor did she quail or tremble, as I leaned on her for support; neither did she pause at the parlour-door, but opened it unhesitatingly.

We found Mrs. Sidney there before us; she was looking quite bewildered, and she now exclaimed to her husband, who was pacing the apartment with rapid strides, "What *is* the matter, Charles? you frighten me so."

Mr. Sidney did not answer her, but he advanced to his daughter, and said, in a solemn tone, "Viola, remember that I am your father—you are my child;—by the sacred ties that bind us, by the obedience you owe me, I charge you tell me what has passed between Lord Glenalbert and yourself this day. From him I can only learn, that from secret yet all-powerful motives, you have mutually resolved to annul your marriage contract. If the fault be his—if presuming upon his high birth, his pride of place, or wealth, he has dared to tamper with the affections of my child, old as I am, I will challenge him to mortal combat, and proclaim to the world his villainy."

"Good gracious, Charles," said his wife, "at your age to fight a duel! how can you talk so?"

"Father," replied Viola, firmly, "Lord Glenalbert has in this, as in everything else, acted in the noblest, kindest manner."

"Then I am to understand the objections are on your side?"

Viola bowed her head.

"What are they?"

"I have explained them to Lord Glenalbert."

"And to me, Sir," said Lord Glenalbert, coming forward, "they are all-powerful, all-convincing. The affair now rests between Miss Sidney and myself. You have no right here to interfere; you cannot compel her to answer you. Only this I will add; Miss Sidney and I part friends, do we not, Viola?" and he held out his hand to her. "Years long and many will elapse ere I again see England—and now farewell! I shall but take leave of my mother. To the guests invited by me for . . . .," his voice faltered, "for to . . . . morrow's ceremony, she will immediately write. You, madam," he said, turning to Mrs. Sidney, "will, for your daughter's sake, in like manner anticipate the assembling of your friends."

"Alas, alas," exclaimed Mrs. Sidney, in a voice of despair, "what will people say?"

"What will they say?" echoed her husband. "What! but that she has disgraced herself; that she has shamed her parents, and brought discredit upon all connected with her. Shame! shame! to gain an honourable man's affections, and to wait the eve of the wedding-day ere she casts him from her, with most flagrant caprice. Fie upon her! fie upon her! a most contemptible flirt, a worthless jilt. If I could for one moment suspect any lurking affection for another were at the bottom of this scandalous affair, my curse light upon her . . . . ."

Lord Glenalbert bounded forward, and laying his hand upon Mr. Sidney's lips, he said, "Remember, sir, she is your daughter."

At the same instant a heavy sound was heard, for Viola had fallen prostrate on the floor.

Mrs. Sidney rushed to her, and all but the mother

was forgotten as she leant over her. "Viola, Viola, 'tis your mother, your friend who calls upon you. Merciful powers, she is dead!"

Lord Glenalbert raised her from the ground, for one minute he held her in his arms; the next, he said to me, "Take her; oh, take her!"

Viola opened her eyes, for misery such as hers brooks not a long suspension of suffering, and she clung to Lord Glenalbert in convulsive agony; but hastily he disengaged himself from her firm, yet unconscious grasp, and placed her in a chair.

Mr. Sidney, whom his daughter's swoon had for a moment alarmed, although he owned it not to himself, no sooner saw her partially recovered, than he exclaimed to his wife, who was sobbing bitterly, and whose tears irritated him yet more against his unhappy daughter, for men have a strong dislike to see their wives cry, especially when their tears are caused by others than themselves. "Why do *you* cry, Anne? Let *her* weep for the shame and disgrace she has brought on us. Faint! pooh, pooh; fainting is ever a woman's last resource. Let her faint, it does not impose on me. She is no longer my child; she has forfeited my affection."

Lord Glenalbert, in the mean time, had approached Viola, and, leaning over her, he whispered, "If at any future time I can befriend you, in *any* way, by *any* means, though I be in far-distant lands, though the broad ocean separate us, yet, yet Viola, you may ever command me!"

She leant back, and turned so deadly pale, that Lord Glenalbert, seeing I had no power to support her, violently pulled the bell, and poor Marables showed her devoted affection by the speed with which she answered the summons. She must, indeed, have flown upon the wings of the whirlwind, to judge by the incredibly short space of time which she took to descend from her own apartment to the parlour; but,

perhaps, as she herself observed, "it happened most fortunately that she was just passing the parlour-door, in the very nick of time."

"Lead Miss Sidney to her room," said Lord Glenalbert, for Mr. Sidney deigned not to speak, and Mrs. Sidney was far too bewildered to take note of anything that was passing around her: and, in the bustle and confusion attendant upon this movement, Lord Glenalbert passed that threshold, never again to set foot thereon.

CHAPTER XV.

Yet day by day
She lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my heart I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away:
Death is dark, and foul, and dull;
But *she* is—O, how beautiful!—SHELLEY.

LADY S.—The paragraphs, you say, Mr. Snake, were all inserted?

SNAKE.—They were, Madam; and as I copied them myself in a feigned hand, there can be no suspicion whence they came.
SHERIDAN.

I MUST do Mrs. Sidney justice: ambitious and worldly as she was—keenly as she must have felt that her daughter had at one fell blow demolished prospects more brilliant than could ever fall to her lot again—she yet at this moment forgot all but that daughter's misery. She had seen her throbbing head laid on the pillow; she had, with her own hands, administered a composing draught; and it was only when Viola said, "Pray leave me, mother, I may perhaps sleep,—pray leave me, cousin Dorothy," that Mrs. Sidney quitted the apartment. I followed her; but I resolved in my own mind to return at a later hour.

Mrs. Sidney called to Marables, and desired to be

instantly summoned if her daughter should feel herself worse. Marables faithfully promised compliance, and gratuitously added, that "she would not even go down to supper, in order that she might be within call." To judge by the tone of self-glorification in which she gave forth this magnanimous resolve, it was easy to perceive that she considered it an act of self-denial, bordering on martyrdom.

"It is a shocking thing, Marables," observed Mrs. Sidney. "Of course you know the match is off. What will people say? How every one will talk."

"Ah! and the dresses, ma'am," answered Marables. "What a pity it is you would have all those silks and satins made up. Had you but left them in the piece, they would have lasted for ever among the young ladies, and now they will be old-fashioned long before Miss Sidney can wear them half out. To be sure, all those presents will be vastly useful; for the young ladies, poor things! were sadly in want of jewellery."

"Presents! Marables; they must, of course, be returned."

"Returned, ma'am!" echoed Marables, looking quite terrified; "*that* will, indeed, be horrible."

Mr. Sidney had, I think, received a far greater shock than his wife; her vanity, but his *pride*, had been deeply wounded. Strictly honourable in all his dealings, conscientious in every relation of life, possessing an untarnished name, and renowned for unblemished credit and integrity in the mercantile world, honour might in him (if anything could) have supplied the place of a higher principle, and now his daughter had indeed wounded him in the most vulnerable point; her bond was forfeit, her note of promise dishonoured, she was a bankrupt in faith and credit. Had Mr. Sidney seen his own name in the Gazette, I do not think he could have experienced a deeper pang. He now called to his wife: "Anne, you surely do not mean to have all these people flock-

ing here to-morrow: you must write off immediately to them, and get cousin Dorothy and Miss Sharpe to help you."

Mrs. Sidney took my arm, and led me to the drawing-room: she wrung her hands in despair as she exclaimed:

"What shall I say, Charles? How that odious Mrs. Brookes will triumph!"

"Say!" rejoined her husband, "say that the wedding is unavoidably postponed; they will learn the truth soon enough. And now," he added, in his sternest manner, "I forbid you, Anne, I forbid one and all, as they value my friendship, as they hope for my countenance and protection, ever to let this subject again pass their lips. I will not that the malicious prying gossips shall be gratified by details in which they have not the remotest concern. Let them put what interpretation they please on *her* conduct; they cannot, alas! think too badly of it."

He left the room, and Dick Sidney entered in breathless haste.

"Oh, mamma! mamma!" exclaimed the boy, "it is of no manner of use sending now to the confectioner's, for lots of things have arrived. A large bride-cake, well frosted over with sugar, which you will now, perhaps, give me to take to school; and cook says that, as far as her share is concerned, the jellies and creams only want 'turning out;' so all you can now contradict will be the ices, and I am sure that will hardly be worth while."

"Oh, I never thought of the breakfast," said poor Mrs. Sidney in a voice of despair; "what shall I do?" and away she went to consult her artiste.

Meanwhile Miss Sharpe and I were writing, as though our pens were impelled with centripetal force towards the paper. Miss Sharpe, however, varied her occupation, by indulging, from time to time, in that contemptible gnat-stinging, commonly called "talking at a person."

"Ah, I thought it would end in something of this kind; poetry, and all such nonsense, from morning to night. Well, thank goodness, Mr. Sidney cannot blame me; I have had nothing to do with his daughter's education. Heaven forbid that Margaret or Lucy should ever act thus! I am sure I could never hold up my head again." Then, as she folded her last note, she said, "I wish you good night, Miss Dorothy; I hope you will find *your pupil* better;" and she swept out of the room.

Miss Sharpe frequently indulged in a sneer; she mistook it for satire,—a prevailing error this; but sneering is a blunt razor, and satire a sharp one; and most incontestably I would rather at any time be cut through and through by a keen weapon, than be hacked and hewn to pieces by a dull one. To be satirical, requires some small degree of talent; whereas this same pointless sneer demands only a snarling manner, a tolerable degree of gall, and a plenitude of self-satisfaction.

The whole of that night I passed by Miss Sidney's bedside; and Viola rejoiced, as she felt the hot blood tingling in her veins,—the pulse that beat with fever's quickened stroke,—the head that throbbed as though each throb must be its last;—Viola rejoiced, for she thought that death was near. Alas, alas! was it not annihilation, oblivion, the everlasting rest of the grave, rather than death, that she sighed for? Was it not the wish to cease to live, to think, to act, to be, rather than the hope of existence in another and a better world, that now occupied her thoughts? But dire and appalling was the public calamity, that could in one single night anticipate the work of years, and blanch the bright tresses of France's lovely and misguided queen;* and dire and appalling, too, must be the

* The frequent allusions to Marie Antoinette, the quotation from Burke, &c., would incline us to think that cousin Dorothy must in her youth have been acquainted with those who were

domestic sorrow, that in one single night can lay youth, health, and vigour in the grave. And so it proved; for, after a few weeks of fever and delirium (during which life hung by the slightest thread, and during which, also, I never left Viola's side by night or day), we had the ecstatic bliss of hearing those thrilling words, "The crisis is past!" It was so indeed; a short time more, and she was amongst us once again. Mr. Sidney had never even asked to see his daughter during her illness, yet for many days, whilst her life was in peril, he remained closely shut up in his own apartment; but now that she was again permitted to join the family circle, he approached her, and, at his wife's request, slightly kissed her pale cheek.

"Viola," he said, "I here promise you never to recur to what is past. I ask not your secret from you; but beware," he added sternly, almost fiercely, "*of its ever being forced upon me.* Mark me well, girl; you know that I am not wont to speak at random."

He left the room, followed by Mrs. Sidney; and Viola threw herself in reckless frenzy on the floor, and sobbed aloud. "Who can have betrayed me?" she exclaimed; "he knows all, all! Oh, Dorothy, have you indeed been so base, so false, so treacherous?"

"Viola," I answered, "I may have had my suspicions [I could not but have had them], as to the individual on whom you have placed your affections; but whatever those suspicions were, whatever they *are*, they never have been, and never shall be divulged. I believe your father spoke on mere surmise." I did not tell her, that, as night after night I had watched over her, when in her delirium she besought me to throw open the window, that the keen air might blow on her fevered brow, I had seen at all hours, in all

eye-witnesses of the tragic horrors of the revolution. All, indeed, will remember the romantic and chivalrous devotion which the émigrés, with scarcely one exception, bore to the memory of Marie Antoinette.—ED.

weathers, a tall form hovering near our dwelling, like an unquiet spirit haunting the spot where its best treasure lies hidden. I have seen one standing motionless, with hat slouched over his dark brow, with folded arms, gazing on the casement whence shone the solitary taper, that nightly told of vigils in the sick chamber. Even when the heavens had opened their flood-gates, and the heavy rain came down with diluvian force, still that solitary man retained his rigid posture; it seemed as though his feet were rooted to the earth. Whether Mr. Sidney's warning voice had any reference to this apparition, I could not tell.

As to any reports and conjectures that might be afloat in the world, we were of course in utter ignorance; since, during Viola's illness, all visitors were denied admittance. We had indeed seen a paragraph in our daily paper, worded as follows:—

"The abrupt disannulling of a marriage contract between a certain noble earl and the beautiful Miss S—— has given rise to various rumours in the fashionable world. We have, however, *undeniable authority* for stating that a deficiency in the lady's marriage portion, which only came to light at the last moment, has placed an insuperable barrier in the way of the projected union. The earl of —— has, we understand, taken his departure for the continent."

There was one other paper, too, directed to Miss Sidney, in (what was evidently) a cramped, feigned hand. I opened it, for I suspected that Mr. Lyndham had chosen, by some private mark, to make this paper a medium of communication, fearing, perhaps, that a letter would fail to reach her; and in that case I felt it would be worse than useless to let her see it. In vain, however, I hunted through every column; there was no cabalistic cipher, or Coptic mark, that I could discover; at length, however, my eye fell on a paragraph, headed in Brobdignagian letters, "It is good to be off with the old love, before you are on with the

new;" containing a coarse and calumnious allusion to Miss Sidney, and marked with so due a proportion of initials and of asterisks, that it was impossible to mistake the individuals alluded to. This was a Sunday paper, too, on the principle, I suppose, of "the better day, the better deed." Whilst with mingled grief and indignation I was still gazing on the paragraph, Mrs. Sidney entered the room, and, being unwilling that she should have the pain of perusing this cruel slander, I thrust the paper into a drawer, purposing to destroy it, the minute I could do so unobserved. In the mean time I was called away to Miss Sidney, and on my return I found, to my dismay, that the paper was gone. In vain I searched, in vain I made strict yet guarded inquiries; all alike professed entire ignorance; and, consoling myself with the assurance that it had been inadvertently destroyed, the circumstance soon passed away from my recollection.

Mrs. Sidney, after the approved fashion of maternity, inflexibly maintained that all her children were equally dear to her, and from constant repetition of the same, she had fully persuaded herself of its truth; still I could not but fancy that Dick was, to all intents and purposes, her favourite child, as the boy himself averred he could twist her round his thumb. Dick Sidney was not bad-hearted, but he was thoughtless, rebellious, mischievous, and idle,—an incipient Radical, a most promising demagogue; abounding in practical jokes, and excelling in that comprehensive qualification best known by the name of teasing. Dick was certainly never known to let anything stand in the way of a joke; although, when he found he had really given pain, he was instantaneously seized with a devout fit of penitence, which always lasted until —— the next temptation. He had been sent for from school, on account of his sister's projected marriage; and he had remained at home ever since, firstly, because during Viola's illness no one

had had time to think of him; and afterwards, because he had a slight cough: and by constantly talking "of damp playgrounds, and of some poor fellow who had died at his school, about four years since, of consumption," he had ingeniously contrived so to work on his mother's fears, as to prevail with her to keep him at home until the warm weather had set in. At length, however, Mr. Sidney interfered, and declared that the very next day he should be sent back to school.

Dick was immediately seized with a furious fit of barking—he even applied his handkerchief to his face—whether to conceal his tears, or hide his laughter (as his mother bid his father "only listen to that tearing cough"), I will not venture to decide: but—"Fathers have flinty hearts, no tears can move them"—remonstrances, cough, and handkerchief, were alike thrown away on Mr. Sidney; he was impracticable. Dick perceiving, with a boy's unerring instinct, that his cue was submission to the *patris potestas*, sagaciously resolved upon making due preparations for his return; he hinted to his mother that she had not yet ordered his cake, fruit, &c.; he told Viola that he was coming to sit in her room, that she might aid him in packing his toys; and he reminded her of some trifling presents she had promised to make him. Viola had ever been an unfailing resource to her brothers and sisters, in all their little difficulties; and she was now, regardless of her own sorrows, entering, with affectionate alacrity, into all Dick's schemes, and listening, with earnest good faith, to his gasconading vaunts of scholastic prowess and dexterity. At length he brought his kite to her, the train of which was damaged, and asked her to repair it.

"But I have no paper, Dick," said Viola; "you must get me some."

"Ah, but there's the rub," replied Dick; "I don't know where to look for any; I have already had nearly a quire this morning from Marables; 'tis useless

asking that old curmudgeon for any more. Oh! I know, I know," shouted the boy; "I'll fetch you plenty in a trice." Away went Dick, and returned with the rapidity of light.

I was busily engaged in fine-drawing an inveterate fracture in Dick's coat; which, he assured me, with most provoking *nonchalance*, he had cut on purpose. The following conversation, therefore, fell unheeded on my ear;—I indeed heard the words, but, at the time, I scarcely took cognizance of their meaning:—

"Ha!" said Viola, "how did you come by this paper, Dick? I am sure my father would not approve of your reading it. How came it into your possession?"

"That's tellings," answered the boy; "so cut away, and ask no questions."

"Well, Dick, if you persist in not telling me, I must show it to my father."

"No, you won't."

"You will find, Dick, that you are mistaken."

"I say you won't, Miss Viola, for your own sake—there's for you!" and he snapped his fingers exultingly.

"For my own sake?"

"Yes, yes; there is something there that concerns you,—so Miss Sharpe and Marables say; not that we can quite make it out. Look here."

"Oh Dick! Dick! what have you done?" exclaimed Viola; "how could you be so cruel!"

I sprang towards her—for the tone of agony in which she spoke had effectually aroused me. Her finger still pointed to the odious paragraph—her lips had a nervous quivering motion—her eyes glanced wildly around. Tears and speech seemed alike denied to her.

Dick looked terrified; he threw his arms about his sister's neck:

"Don't, Viola," he said; "don't look so. I didn't mean to vex you, I am sure; for, after all, I like you

better than all the rest of them put together; and if Glenalbert is gone off, what does it matter? there's more lords than he in the world. Why, there's Villiers, of our school, will be a lord some day or other; so don't pipe," he continued, as the tears now fell fast down Viola's cheeks; "don't cry, Viola,—I didn't mean to vex you."

"Oh! I know it, I know it, Dick," exclaimed his unhappy sister; "it is not your fault. But am I, indeed, so spoken of, Dorothy? Do I thus stand as a mark for public scorn and contumely? Is my good name, my reputation, credit—all that a woman need wish to live for—are they thus blasted, vilified, calumniated?"

Never had I seen her so moved. I told her that none would give credence to the libel (I spoke of the low estimation in which the paper* was held). Still the mere circumstance that such an anecdote had appeared in a public journal deeply agitated her. I now turned to Dick, and asked how he had come by the paper.

"Why," said the boy, "I was rummaging about the room one day, in search of something to cut up into chairs and tables, when I espied this in the table-drawer; and, just as I was carrying it off, whom should I stumble on but Marables, who took the paper from me; and, when she had looked at its name, she was in high glee; and away she took it to Miss Sharpe, and they put their wise heads together; and, in short, I heard them whisper a great deal about Viola; but I told them if they did not give me back the paper, I would tell all that they had been saying; so they returned it, and I threw it into my box along with my toys; and I had forgotten all about it, until I chanced upon it this morning, when I was clearing out my things. However, I'll tear it up now, Viola, since I see it vexes

* This paper has, doubtless, been long since consigned to the tomb of the Capulets.—Ed.

you:—there it goes; no one will be able to put these bits together again, and my kite shall do as it is: so kiss me, like a good-natured creature as you are, and think no more about it."

Viola did kiss him most affectionately; but that she thought of it, long and deeply thought of it, I saw but too plainly.

CHAPTER XVI.

I have sold all my trumpery; not a counterfeit stone, not a riband, glass, pomander, brooch, table, book, ballad, knife, tape, glove, shoe-tye, bracelet, horn, ring, to keep my pack from fasting; they throng who shall buy first; as if my trinkets had been hallowed, and brought a benediction to the buyer: by which means, I saw whose purse was best in picture; and what I saw to my own use I remembered.—SHAKSPEARE.

What man art thou, that thus bescreen'd in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?—SHAKSPEARE.

TIME passed on; Viola was daily acquiring strength; and we were, to all appearance, the same as we had been before that hapless episode. We were sitting at breakfast one morning; Mrs. Sidney was attentively perusing a printed circular; interrupting herself every now and then by joyous exclamations of:

"Well, I never read anything so cheap; rich satin at 3s. a yard, white blond at 1s. 8d., chintzes at 7s. the dress, latest patterns. 'Pon my word, these are bargains; let me see the name, 'Fleeceall and Co., Cheapside.' Cousin Dorothy, you must go there to-day for me; should you be tired, you can take a coach *one* way, either there or back; but, as you are a good walker, I think it will be only a pleasant trip for you. The younger girls want regularly rigging, for the summer: Viola's wardrobe is well stocked"—and Mrs. Sidney sighed deeply. "If you go early, you will be home in time for dinner. Only make a bargain

with the people, that they shall send home the things; it will be quite worth their while, and it will save your taking a coach."

Mrs. Sidney furnished me with a long list of articles that were quite indispensable. She prudently added a few things that might be wanted at some future period, and which I was on no account to let slip through my hands, if I could but secure them at *reasonable* prices; and she invested me with full powers to purchase any article, of any genus, species, or variety (whether or not I could discover the use to which, either presently or remotely, it might be applied), if the same were but offered me as a very tempting bargain.

Mrs. Sidney, however, had the precaution to furnish me with a stated sum, which I was strictly forbidden to exceed. Thus accredited, I set forth on my mission; and arrived at a dark, dingy, pestiferous shop, lumbered with articles, whose colour, texture, and quality, were alike indiscernible in the *chiaro scuro* of a semi-blockaded window, and cumbered with shopmen, who rushed about in tumultuous confusion, as though in momentary dread of an execution. Alas! long before the indispensable articles were purchased, my stock of cash, like the days of Barbauld's beggar, was dwindling to its shortest span; the cheap satins turned out to be nothing more than thin Persians, the blonde had been all bought up, and the chintzes proved cottons of the coarsest description, that a maid of all work would have scorned. In one thing only I was successful: the men promised to send home the goods I had purchased;—and, sick and faint from the closeness of the atmosphere, my head aching with the deafening clamours, I left the shop. It was not till I got into the street that I perceived the day was rapidly drawing to a close. I walked very fast, but it was dusk ere I reached my own neighbourhood, and the lamps were not yet lighted.

This is the most unpleasant of all hours for a woman to walk alone; when, in the dim and partial light, age and ugliness may be mistaken for beauty, and a rusty black gown and yellowish-whitish swan's-down tippet may be exalted into the "purpled, ermined robes of royalty." Accordingly, I felt that I had, for some time, been dodged. I walked on yet faster, but the footsteps gained on me. At length, in very despair, I stood still, and threw back my veil; for I thought, if my pursuer can but gain a glimpse of my face, I am safe from all further molestation.

Quickly he advanced. I knew him well; he knew me, too. I would have fled, but retreat was now impossible.

"Yes, it is you," said Mr. Lyndham; "I thought I could not be mistaken. Do not hurry on so; I must speak with you"—and he forcibly put my arm within his. "*She* has been dying, has she not? Will you not answer me? I know you hate me; I knew you always hated me; but *she* used to say, that the wretched had ever claims on your sympathy; and where will you find one more wretched than I?"

"Mr. Lyndham," I replied, "you are unwise to detain me; you have done mischief enough already; would you yet work more? What is the use of your thus pursuing her, thus hovering near the house? Mr. Sidney will never listen to you, even—"

He interrupted me. "I know it, for I wrote to him, mentioning my affection for his daughter, and soliciting an interview; I wrote to him in the humblest terms; I demeaned myself before him; I crouched in the dust, and I received an answer,—such an answer! A man whose soul is in his purse; cold, calculating, mercenary."

"Hush!" I said, "Mr. Lyndham, I cannot, will not, listen to this."

I strove to free myself from his grasp, but he said, "Have patience, madam; I shall not detain you long;

I have but to make one request, it is the last favour I shall ever demand at your hands; you will not then, I think, refuse to grant it. I am going away for years."

"I am very glad indeed to hear it," I exclaimed; "it is the best thing you can do."

"Thank you," he said, bitterly. "Tell me, why have you taken such a dislike to me? or rather, why, from the first moment I saw you, did you regard me with looks of defiance and mistrust; why have you constantly rejected my every proffered civility? Was it a crime to love her? Say, rather, how could I have steeled my heart against such peerless excellence, such unrivalled fascination?"

I had by this time arrived in my own street; I bounded forward, and attained the steps of the door.

"Take this," said Mr. Lyndham, thrusting a letter into my hands; "it contains only my farewell."

I was such a soft-hearted fool, that I had already half relented in his favour; but I thought of Lord Glenalbert, I thought of that parting scene, and I said, "I will not deliver this note, Mr. Lyndham." "As I spoke, I threw in on the pavement; the door opened, and I entered to weep plenteously. Mrs. Sidney, however, soon sent for me; and being closely questioned by her as to my morning's success, I frankly confessed my delinquency; and said, in excuse, that having tossed over and over the merchandise, I had been forced to purchase several articles at usurious prices, in requital of the trouble I had given.

Mrs. Sidney appeared greatly annoyed, and she said, "I was a fool to think of sending you; Dorothy, I wish you would bear in mind the notable aphorism, that 'most persons are slaves because they cannot say the monosyllable no;' but I wish, also, they would send the things—I conclude they are good of their kind." For my own part, I secretly dreaded their

arrival, for I thought they would scarcely stand the test of a well-lighted apartment. I afterwards found I might have saved my credit; the packages were never fated to arrive; Fleeceall and Co.'s goods (as we learned upon inquiry) having being seized that very afternoon, and my ill-fated mission serves only "to point a moral, or adorn a tale," being an abiding caution to all bargain-loving housewives.

CHAPTER XVII.

See where she stands! a mortal shape indeed,
With love, and life, and light, and deity,
And motion, which may change, but cannot die;
An image of some bright eternity;
A shadow of some golden dream;
A metaphor of spring, and youth, and beauty.

SHELLEY.

L'amant que j'adore,
Prêt a me quitter,
D'un instant encore
Voudrait profiter;
Félicité vaine!
Qu'on ne peut saisir,
Trop près de la peine
Pour être un plaisir.

MADAME D'HOUDETOT.

IT was, I think, about a week after my interview with Mr. Lyndham, an interview I had scrupulously kept secret from Viola, that Mrs. Sidney received the following letter from Mr. Strickland, the gentleman under whose fostering care Dick Sidney was placed.

"*Holly Lodge.*

"MADAM,

"I deem it a duty incumbent on one, holding, as I do, the onerous and responsible situation of head master at a preparatory school, to inform you that

Master Sidney, having, on his arrival at Holly Lodge, evinced manifest symptoms of a certain titillation in the bronchia, commonly called a cough, has, I grieve to say, by divers flagrant and glaring acts of imprudence, exaggerated the said malady, and is, at this present moment, undergoing the durance vile of confinement to his bed; a measure I had recourse to at the instigation of our Esculapius, who avouches that his young patient has certain febrile indications arising from the catarrhal complaint.

"In conclusion, madam, I have the satisfaction of assuring you that Master Sidney bears his incarceration with far greater philosophy than I could have expected; having stipulated only, that he should be plentifully supplied with currant jelly; a request with which I have not failed to comply, being certified from experience, that the *argumentum ad gulam* is always most efficacious in these cases.

"And, finally, entreating that you will not suffer your maternal fears to be too easily excited,

"Permit me to subscribe myself,

"Your grateful and obedient servant,

"J. VICESIMUS STRICKLAND."

Mrs. Sidney, however, did suffer her maternal fears to be very much excited, and it required all Mr. Sidney's eloquence to prevent her setting off that very evening to visit her son; at length she yielded, and the carriage was ordered for an early hour the ensuing morning. Holly Lodge was situated in the neighbourhood of Twickenham, and as Miss Sharpe had a sister living at Richmond, it was settled that she should be dropped *en route*, whilst Margaret and Lucy were to accompany their mother for the benefit of the country air.

Viola and I were accordingly left alone on the morning in question; we repaired, as usual, to her own light, elegant apartment. But she, who was wont to be so actively employed; whose powerful mind was

ever grasping at some new acquirement; she to whose intellectual being occupation was once as necessary as air and food to her animal existence, now sat listlessly, swaying herself to and fro in melancholy abstraction, her hands drooping on either side, her eyes wandering with purposeless regard, as though they knew not where to fix. It saddened me to look at her.

"Dear Viola," I at length said, "will you not read to me?"

"O yes, I'll read," she answered, vacantly; "I have done nothing else all last night, and the night before, and the night before that too; I do not think I shall ever do aught else but read this, this. She drew a letter from the folds of her dress; I deemed it was that same one of which she had spoken to Lord Glenalbert; and I said:

"Viola, I am disappointed! from you at least I expected far other and better things; I did think that you would have battled and struggled with this vain yet opposing weakness; and by a life of active piety, of strenuous exertion, and never-failing vigilance, I hoped that you might redeem your past errors, and regain the love and good opinion of your parents, which, you must be aware, you have by your conduct forfeited; above all, I trusted that you would once more learn to respect yourself."

Viola and I had indeed changed characters; she, who used to lead all around her, and myself in especial,—she, who I once fondly thought could do no wrong, now listened in silence to my upbraidings, and was humbled and abashed as a chidden child. She drooped her eyes, whilst the tears trembled on their long lashes; but hastily she dashed them away ere they fell down her colourless cheek, and raising her head, she said, "I could be all that you say, Dorothy, I *would* be *all* that you describe, if I might but see him once again; once before he leaves England for years, perhaps for ever. Small prospect, indeed, have we of

ever meeting upon earth again. But read this, Dorothy; it will speak for him, it will plead for me far better than anything I could say. Read it aloud."

"Dear Viola," I said, "of what will it avail my reading this?"

"Much! much!" she replied.

I took the letter from her. It was written as I thought he would write. Fervid, eloquent, impassioned, insinuating. I marvelled not that, to her partial apprehension, it seemed to breathe the very spirit of sincere love and rapt devotion. He mentioned his application to her father; he mentioned likewise its result, guardedly, as though he would spare her feelings, yet with suppressed bitterness, as one who chafed against the restraints he had imposed on himself; and then suddenly he changed his tone, and spoke of banishment, of exile in a strange land, of the drear opaqueness of an isolated spirit, of one dead before his time, dead in heart, and lost to sympathy. He finished by imploring that she would grant him a parting interview. I thought (perhaps I was prejudiced) that the whole of this had its source more in the imagination than the heart, and I returned her the letter, unmoved.

"Can you resist that?" said Viola. "I can, I must," I replied.

She threw herself into my arms. "If you can resist that, at least I know you cannot—will not, resist me. Dear cousin Dorothy, your arrival here was a blessing to me; from the first moment that we met, my heart warmed to you. You were my earliest friend, my confidant, my counsellor. In sickness you have watched over me; in sorrow you have soothed me; in joy you have sympathised with me; often have you forestalled my slightest wish; never have you refused my most trivial request;—then do not, oh, do not, deny me now. If you, indeed, 'hold me in your heart,'

if my happiness is valuable in your sight, you will grant my prayer. By your blighted hopes, by your cheerless youth, by your neglected age, hear me, oh, hear me, Dorothy. I ask but for one short hour,—I ask but to bid him farewell. You shall be present, you shall hear each word I utter. I will enter into no engagement; I only ask to see him once more; I may *never* see him again"

"Viola," I said, softened even to tears by her entreaties, "I may rely on you, I think?"

"Do I look as if I meant to deceive you?" she replied.

I gazed on her fair, open brow,—I looked into her clear, lustrous eye—I threw my arms about her neck, and said, "I can refuse thee nothing." Perhaps I was wrong; but, even if that time were to come over again, should I act differently? Alas! I fear not.

I took upon myself the task of informing Mr. Lyndham that I yielded to his solicitations, and would permit him to make his final adieus in person. I despatched my note by a trusty messenger, having fixed an early hour for his visit, as I was most anxious to anticipate Mrs. Sidney's return. Perhaps also (but it is an ungracious task to tent our motives to the quick), I secretly hoped Mr. Lyndham would be from home when my note arrived; and, having ascertained that Marables, whose inquisitorial propensities I rather dreaded, had, "just stept out on an errand," which I knew, from experience, meant neither more nor less than that she had taken herself off for the entire day, I awaited, as best I might, the result of my summons.

Viola sat at my feet; her lips moved slightly:—perhaps she was preparing what she had to say; perhaps she was seeking for strength to meet the coming trial; but, as his impetuously hurried knock was heard at the street-door, and his well-known step ascended the stairs, I marked her colour come and go with the

rapidity of the summer lightning; and the conviction rushed full and strong upon my mind, that I had acted most unwisely in permitting this interview. Viola saw and understood my anxiety; and, pressing my hand with energy, said, "Do not fear me, cousin Dorothy."

The door of the apartment flew open, and Mr. Lyndham entered.

That scene might have served as a rare study for an artist's pencil.

The mid-day sun poured his fervid rays into the apartment, with an effulgence that would have proved insufferable, had they not been partially obscured by the pale rose-coloured draperies, which threw a mellow, harmonious light on all around. The room was redolent with the fragrance of innumerable plants, rich in blossom, "gay with a divinity of colours,"—for it was the month of June, the season when the floral goddess keeps her prime festival, and the flowers come forth in their brightest holyday suits, to do her honour. There was silence in the ambient air, and silence on the earth; an universal stillness reigned without—a dreamy lotus-like slumber of forgetfulness seemed to have fallen on the world—that more than sabbatical rest, which so often pervades the trafficless quarters of London during the solstitial heat of a summer's noon.

And there she stood—that pale girl, like some rare piece of Grecian sculpture, so passionless were the eyes; but the half-parted lips gave that breathless, eager look, which oft-times makes the marble seem "a thing of life:"—and there, too, on the threshold of the apartment, stood that haughty young man, as one who hesitated whether he should advance or recede. His bold contour of form and feature, his dark brow, rendered yet darker by the conflicting passions that seemed struggling for mastery, as he cast a fierce, and almost vindictive glance on me, and then bent his eyes fixedly on her, with a gaze, half tender, half reproach-

ful; all alike suggested to me, that, with just such a look of mingled scorn, love, and compassion, must Coriolanus have greeted Volumnia, when she advaned at the head of the Roman embassy.

There was a profound silence for several seconds. It was broken by Mr. Lyndham.

"Is it to be ever thus?" he cried. "Am I, then, never to see you alone? Will you, can you, thus allow yourself to be under tutelage. May you not speak or move, but at her beck and bidding?"

Then approaching me, he said:

"Madam, my engagement here is with Miss Sidney,—of her, and not of you, I solicited this interview: may I now request you to leave us in private?"

But Viola, who had hitherto remained like one spell-bound, now eagerly exclaimed:

"It is at *my* request she stays; but for her we should not now have met. She does not, never did, control my actions. You are free to speak, as I am free to hear; only you must be brief—each minute that you stay is fraught with danger."

"How can I be brief," he said, passionately, "when perhaps I see you for the last time—when I have that to tell would last an eternity?"

He began from the moment of his introduction to her at Turretcliff; he meant not, he said, to extenuate his conduct; for, from the very first, he had felt his danger, but he had braved it; and he added, vehemently, that were he possessed of the enchanter's wand, and could recall the past from the fathomless abyss, where it lay sepulchred, he would willingly again incur the mighty risk, so that he might but live o'er again those few hours of unmingled bliss which had chequered his blighted and joyless existence. He had not, he said, meant to involve her; for, in his wildest dreams, he had never ventured to hope his love might be requited. He then went on to speak of

his prospects in life. He said that his fortune was small, but that his profession was one which, sooner or later, would yield a plentiful harvest;—and he told of a splendid career, which was now open to him in India, where he was about to practise as a barrister. He then burst into an eloquent harangue on the selfish and cruel policy of which those were guilty, who should attempt to separate two beings whose tastes were congenial, whose hearts were devoted to each other; and he spoke wildly of parents offering up their children to the Moloch of ambition, and drowning their cries with the clangour of the marriage bells.

To all this, Viola listened in silence; and, after a pause, Mr. Lyndham resumed; but the fierce and excited manner in which he had hitherto spoken vanished almost abruptly; and there was a sad and melancholy cadence in his voice, as he said, that, when first he knew her, his future life seemed to vibrate between good and evil—that she had already done much for him—that she had taught him to form high and glorious resolves—that she had inspired him with bright and glowing dreams of excellence—that she had made him love virtue for its own sake.

Viola was moved, agitated; he saw his advantage; and, throwing himself before her, said:

"And now my fate is in your hands; will you not hearken to me? Will you abandon me to the fierce dominion of my own uncurbed passions? No, rather give me something to live for, toil for, or even to die for; consent but to share my fate, and I feel that I may yet, in some degree, be worthy of your love; I may yet live to achieve a name, that men shall honour and reverence; I may yet live to win fame's brightest crown, and throw my laurels at your feet; or I may, at least on my death-bed, rejoice that life was given me as a boon; but if you forsake me, I am lost, I sink in the slough of folly, dissipation, and revelry; my

talents wasted—nay, worse, misused; my life a curse to myself, a blessing to none. On you, then, hang my hopes on earth, my hopes hereafter." Viola wept.

Alas! alas! is there aught that can touch a woman like this? She whose trusting, confiding nature leads her ever to cling to another for support, now finds one (and he a loved one) demanding at her hands that sympathy and succour which her heart aches to refuse, and which to her fragile existence and dependent being are necessary, as the life-sustaining air she breathes,—she, too, who believes, and trembles whilst she believes, now, in her fond credulity, imagines that he for whom (self-unmindful) she would peril all, may, through her relentless, stern resolve, be lost for ever; is it marvel that thus believing, she pauses, weeps, and falters in her purpose? is it marvel that Viola Sidney sobbed aloud, as her head drooped on Lyndham's shoulder?

He threw his arm around her, and softly whispered. The voice was low, the words were few; yet did they fall on my ear with that clear, distinct sound with which, in a whispering-gallery, the faintest murmur is carried from one focus to another.

"Fly with me," he said.

Viola disengaged herself from his embrace; and clear and distinct, too, was her voice, as she answered, "Never!"

There was a brief pause, and calm, very calm, was her manner: albeit there was something of reproach in her accents, as she said:

"I have done much, suffered much, for you,—I have betrayed one noble and confiding heart—I have made myself that which woman instinctively shrinks from—the public talk, the public scorn;—my most secret affairs have been canvassed—my conduct questioned, blamed, vilified. I have, alas! brought discredit on all connected with me—I have plunged my parents into grief—friends have learned to look coldly on me

—my young sisters, on their entrance into life, may find their conduct misinterpreted, their most innocent actions condemned, because men shall remember that their sister *was a jilt*. All this have I done, yet am I not prepared to break my parents' hearts; yet am I not so utterly selfish as, in my love for you, to forget all I owe to others."

She had commenced in scorn, but her voice towards the close was tremulous from emotion.

There was something almost sardonic in the sneer which curled his lip, as Mr. Lyndham replied:

"This is, indeed, a text which furnishes its own commentary. It is at least frankly spoken. I were worse than contemptible, should I further intrude upon your leisure. Farewell, Miss Sidney. I wake from a pleasant, but most delusive, dream. Too late I find that you have never loved."

Viola smiled, but it was such a joyless smile; so fraught with heartfelt anguish and rooted sorrow, that I thought it would have brought him to her feet, humbly to supplicate pardon for his harshness; but haughtily he moved towards the door.

"Farewell," she said; "we may yet meet in happier times—under happier circumstances."

His hand was on the lock of the door, when it was arrested by Viola's exclamation of his name, in a tone of breathless agony.

He now advanced eagerly towards her, but she only said, "Heaven for ever bless you," and she rushed through the opposite door, which led to her own apartment.

Mr. Lyndham approached me, and his countenance bore that dark, withering expression, which had once before so appalled me at Turretcliff.

"You, madam," he said, "I have to thank for this: but for you, I should have conquered. May the misery you have this day wrought, the wretchedness

you have inflicted, recoil with twofold vengeance on yourself;—I can wish you no worse fate."

Then bowing to me with mock humility, he withdrew.

CHAPTER XVIII.

> We take no note of time
> But from its loss.
>
> YOUNG.

> Oh, bitter thought!
> Which leads to what I was, by what I am.
>
> DR. MOORE.

OH, time! time! Do the sands in thy glass run low? Are thy wings pinioned, that thou thus trailest thy weary flight? Inscrutable enigma art thou, that being past art still to come. Thou veritable hydra! Thou self-generating, self-propagating mystery! Why, as we gaze on thee with "reverted eyes," seemest thou to have sped all too swiftly? Why, as we turn on thee our prospective vision, dost thou advance with faltering step and slow, as though thou wert weighed down beneath the burden of chances, changes, woes, and sorrows, with which thou art so heavily laden? Thy course, indeed, hath not been trackless: deep is the impress of thy footsteps.

Fifteen years are passed away since Mr. Lyndham's departure; and many and various are the events that have befallen us. But first I would speak of Mr. Sidney.

How changed is he! Bankrupt in fortune, prostrate in spirit, few would recognise the once zealous, sanguine, active man of business. Where is the firm step, the upright figure, the keen glance? Gone! for ever gone! and in their place, you may note a shambling gait, a shrunken frame, an eye that wan-

ders restlessly, or is fixed in drear abstraction on the ground. He, who during forty years of his life never missed his daily walk to the City, never failed to make his appearance on 'Change at the very moment of "closing the market," now rarely stirs from his small gloomy parlour, where, with head just raised above the blinds, he notes each passer-by, and shrinks if in return they cast a casual glance on the care-worn face of the bankrupt merchant.

But there is another, and a sadder change; one, at least, that touches *me* more nearly. With sorrow I look on Viola Sidney, and mark the ravages that grief, far more than time, has wrought in her once peerless beauty. Her eye has lost its lustre, her form its symmetry, her cheek is pale, far paler than it was wont to be; she is grown old before her time.

In Mrs. Sidney I see but little alteration; her toilette is rather more elaborate; her figure is somewhat amplified; she frets over her domestic calamities; she frets, too, at the smallness of her apartments, and diminution in her list of visiting acquaintance, although in confidential moments she owns to us that, "Were it not for the look of the thing, she should scarcely regard the loss of her carriage, as she has so much more time to get on with her embroidery;" and she points exultingly to a set of chairs, which, with pains-taking diligence, she completed in something less than five years. She piques herself much on the economy displayed in this arrangement, perversely forgetting that the mounting of the said chairs cost just double the sum which she need have expended on a plain set of mahogany.

The other members of Mr. Sidney's family are ——— but why should I anticipate? Wherefore should I "leave untried the growth of that wide gap?" Memory opens her flood-gates: old scenes, old times, old recollections crowd on me: my very

thoughts seem peopled. I am but just risen from a sick-bed (that haunt of egotism); my meditations, during the last few months, have revolved in one small circle, of which self has been the centre; I have been, so to say, self-ridden. The very demon of egotism has possessed me; I must exorcise the fiend; I must think of others, talk of others, write of others. Mine be the task to link the present with the past.

CHAPTER XIX.

> I cannot bear love, like a chancery suit,
> The age of a patriarch depending;
> Then pluck up a spirit, no longer be mute,
> Give it, one way or other, an ending.
>
> RITSON'S SONGS.

THERE are, I suppose, few persons who may not, on reviewing their past lives, recall some brief episode in their existence, some isolated point in their career, which has vanished like a morning dream or summer cloud. The period alluded to may have been one of deepest anguish; it may, on the contrary, have been an oasis in the desert of existence; still, equally has it passed away, and left no vestige of its being. It has seemed to bear no relation to the past, to have no connection with the future.

Such, I soon foresaw, would prove the nature of our acquaintance with Lord Glenalbert. From the moment of his departure, we found ourselves totally estranged from every member of his family; so complete, indeed, was the severance, that some months elapsed ere I ascertained that Lady Mary Allonby had not long survived the separation from a brother whom she idolized. Even at this distance of time my eyes fill with tears, as I think on her early fate; so fair, so gentle, so beloved! Yet for her had youth's

sunniest hours been prematurely clouded o'er with sorrow; and she had learned to look with an eye of faith beyond the portals of the tomb. For such, indeed, it were worse than vain to mourn!

Mrs. Sidney, true to her character, did not relinquish without a struggle, all hope of renewing her acquaintance with Lady Glenalbert; but every overture of civility on her part was met by the countess and her daughters with haughty insolence, or cool disdain. Even the kind-hearted Lady Sarah Herbert testified no inclination to resume an intercourse which had commenced under such happy auspices, and which had promised to be so abiding in its duration. She passed the whole of that, to us, memorable season in London; but not once did the sight of her visiting-card gladden Mrs. Sidney's eyes.

Mrs. Page, indeed, from her intimacy with the Herberts, might still have formed a connecting link between the parties, but few things are more contagious than the defection of friends (by courtesy so called); and Mrs. Page became suddenly afflicted with that defect of the visual organs, which the learned term myopy, and which, in the vernacular, is best known by the term shortness of sight. Availing herself of this conveniently assumed infirmity, Mrs. Page, with admirable effrontery, passed a whole evening in Mrs. Sidney's society, without evincing the slightest symptom of recognition.

Helen Page, however "faithful found among the faithless," still continued to *foist* her society on us, always contriving (by that strange instinct with which idle people seem endowed) to fix on our busiest hours for her visitations. One morning in particular, as Viola and I were sitting together, both vainly striving to persuade ourselves that we were as happy in each other's society as we were wont to be in bygone days, Helen Page bounded into the room, her broad good-humoured face beaming with intelli-

gence (an expression it rarely wore), and pausing not to make the common salutation, with which civilized people are wont to accost each other, plunged at once, after the approved epic style, into the middle of her story.

"Well, my dear," she exclaimed to Viola, "I have such a piece of news for you,—you'll be so surprised; I can hardly believe it myself. But not to keep you longer in suspense, I am going to be married."

"I sincerely congratulate you, Helen," said Viola, affectionately.

"Ah, but I see, my dear, that you are dying to know the name of my *Futur*—'je vous le donne en trois;' guess,—you can't! Well, then, Frank Herbert is the man."

"You are jesting now, Helen."

"Indeed, then," replied Miss Page, "I should be very sorry to think it a jest, and yet it really was the drollest thing imaginable. You must know we had a small party the other evening (mamma would, I am sure, have asked you, only some of the Herberts were with us, and it would, perhaps, have been a little awkward for you to meet); well, I was dancing with Mr. Herbert,—with Frank I mean (of course I shall always call him Frank now)—and the conversation happening to turn on marriage, he said, 'Now, Miss Page, no one will give me credit for the assertion, yet I am myself quite a marrying man, only I am so unfortunate, I can't get any one to have me.'

"'Perhaps,' I answered, 'you never tried.'

"'Oh,' he replied, 'I fear it is quite a hopeless case; if you will only believe me, I am very much in love with you, yet were I to propose, you would of course reject me.'

"'How do you know that?' I asked; 'I am sure I never told you so.'

"'What!' he exclaimed, 'do you really mean it? will you have me, Miss Page?'

"'Can you doubt it, Mr. Herbert?' I replied—and so the affair ended; before the end of the quadrille, I had referred him to mamma; he called the next day (you can't think how my heart beat), but it all went off very smoothly, everything is settled, and we are to be married almost directly. But the most comical part of the affair is, that Frank declares he began the conversation in pure fun, and had not the remotest idea I should take him at his word. Yet, after all, depend upon it, we shall be quite as happy as though we had gone on sighing and languishing through a whole season, varying the pastime with little interludes of coquetry on my part, and heroics on his; of stormy partings, and reconciliatory meetings. I hate your 'never-ending, still beginning,' Durandarte-like courtships. I am always for things done off-hand."

Having thus frankly discussed her future prospects, Miss Page took her leave; but notwithstanding these confident anticipations of felicity, hers was, I believe, anything but a happy union. After a brief career of profuse extravagance and thoughtless dissipation, Mrs. Frank Herbert threw herself out of the pale of society. What became of her afterwards I never knew. Poor thing! her faults were rather those of the head than the heart. She was forsaken, ere she in her turn forsook.

CHAPTER XX.

'Tis all in vain, it may not last,
The sickly sunlight dies away,
And the thick clouds that veil the past
Roll darkly o'er my present day.
Have I not flung them off, and striven
To seek some dawning hope in vain?
Have I not been for ever driven
Back to the bitter past again?

F. A. KEMBLE.

My son, Sir!

COMIC ANNUAL.

AMPLY did Viola redeem the promise she had once made me, for she yielded not supinely to her grief, but strove, with all the energy of her powerful mind, to rouse herself to action. Far from indulging in vain regrets, she shunned the solitude that had once been dear to her. Diligently, too, did she apply herself to the study of fresh sciences; and if for one moment the book were suffered to fall from her hands in listless reverie, a word, a look from me, would recall her wandering thoughts, and she would apply herself anew to the task, as though her very being depended on her assiduity. But the hope that once gladdened existence had fled; her character had lost its peculiar tone; the tension of her spirits had been too great,—they never recovered their elasticity.

When standing on the brink of some fearful chasm, the dread result of a convulsion of nature, with the rocks beneath me scathed by the lightning, or riven

by the whirlwind, although I may be awestruck, yet do I not feel the aching pity with which I gaze on the lowly friable stone, wearing away beneath the ceaseless dropping of the waters, as they fall on it with "tinkling plash," surely, yet slowly, performing their work of desolation. And as in the natural, so in the moral world; it is not the appalling calamity, which, at one rude blow, crushes its victim to the earth, that excites my deepest sympathy; for I know full well that the very magnitude of the grief stuns us for the time,—that its intensity produces a mental numbness, when the first overwhelming shock is past; but rather the daily, hourly care,—the petty martyrdoms, which are never blazoned to the world,—the necessity of mingling with those, whose every word and action jars painfully with our keener sensibilities,—the hollow task of veiling the aching heart with the smiling lip; —these are the trials that wring my very soul to contemplate, and these had Viola now to endure in heart-silence, and in heart-sorrow; for to whom might she confide her griefs? She remembered her father's warning words, "Beware of its ever being forced upon me;" and from her mother it would have been vain to expect that degree of healthy sympathy which ever lightens, even if it may not remove, the burden of sorrow. Mrs. Sidney (with the best intentions in the world) would have blamed, lectured, wearied herself and all around her, with fruitless lamentations, and finally have applied to her husband for counsel and assistance.

Oh, it is not the matrimonial engagement, though it be protracted from year to year, and adverse fate forbid the union,—it is not when approving friends sanction the prolonged courtship, and delay weakens not the attachment, that an engagement is a thing difficult to endure. If of the patriarch it might be said, that those seven years' servitude "seemed unto him but as a few days," for the love he bore the Syrian

maid, surely to one of that sex, whose earliest tutelage is submission to events, and patience under disappointment,—whose very existence is one of prospective rather than of present bliss,—the period in question is a season of felicity, far more than of probation. Indeed, it may be fairly mooted, whether the days of courtship are not the fairest and brightest in a woman's existence. How unbounded is then her sway! A mimic queen, she reigns, and, monarch-like, she can do no wrong; her wishes are anticipated, her wildest caprices regarded as fascinations; homage and devotion track her steps; she lives in an ideal world; her path, for one brief while, is strewn with flowers.

But with Viola Sidney it was not so; for her there remained only the lingering hope, the dire uncertainty, the fell suspicion, and the busy rumour; the disconnected phrase that fears to wound, the gentle innuendo couching an hundred meanings in the one, the half-breathed word of consolation, that more than all does leave its rankling sting behind. No marvel that her beauty faded, and her spirits sunk beneath the trial.

In Viola I had long centred all my hopes, and with her blighted prospects my interest in life seemed to have fled. I now endeavoured to occupy myself solely with my younger cousins, but in vain; I looked on them with a feeling akin to that with which old Priam is represented as regarding his many stalwart sons, when the gods had reft him of Hector. Still, as time revolved, and, one by one, they entered on the busy stage of life, I could not but sympathise with their failure, or success, although very different was the feeling to that absorbing and engrossing interest with which I was wont to regard her who seemed to me as a second self.

James Sidney, having pursued his commercial studies to his father's entire satisfaction, was now (after three years' residence on the continent) summoned home, and forthwith assigned his department in the counting-

house. Assiduous in his duties, indefatigable in his exertions, skilled in all the technicalities of his vocation, James soon rose into high favour with the heads of the establishment; so much so, that after undergoing a due noviciate, he was enrolled a member of the firm; and it was soon acknowledged, on all hands, that the house had benefited greatly by the ability and intelligence of its junior partner.

Not the certainty that his son would one day rise to the highest honours of the state, could have delighted Mr. Sidney half so much as did this earnest of his future eminence in the mercantile world. He now confidently looked forward to a period when the house of "Brookes, Sidney, and Co." should become one of the most distinguished in the City: it was true he might not live to witness so happy a result, but the certainty of its being effected, and that, too, through his son's intervention, gratified Mr. Sidney's feelings, both as a parent and a merchant. It was, I believe, the first time my unimaginative cousin had ever indulged in that pleasant, yet delusive reverie, entitled a day-dream.

There was, however, one point on which the father and son differed materially. Mr. Sidney was prudent and cautious, to the verge of timidity, whilst James was rash and speculative, to a fault. The petty, yet sure and honourable gains in which his father delighted, were to the youth an abomination. He was, in heart, a gambler, and longed to clear the board at "one fell swoop;" but this propensity, for a while, lay dormant. Checked and controlled as he was by the higher powers, young Sidney had neither temptation nor opportunity for its development.

In precisely the same ratio that James gratified his father's expectations, Dick disappointed them. He had left Mr. Strickland's in disgrace, and had been subsequently sent to a public school, where having involved himself in some exploits, rather more hazard-

ous than honourable, he very prudently (to borrow his own expression) tendered his resignation; in other words, he ran away just in time to save the odium of a public dismissal. Dick's future destination in life occasioned no small perplexity to his parents. That unlucky scapegoat, the Navy, was, of course, the first profession which suggested itself to Mr. Sidney's mind; but Mrs. Sidney here interposed her veto, so that idea was, perforce, abandoned. Dick, himself, fascinated by the prospect of idling away his time with impunity, dazzled by the anticipation of sporting a scarlet coat, and ecstacised with certain glorious visions of shooting *ad libitum*, stoutly contended for the army; and Mr. Sidney as stoutly opposed. Factions now ran high between the parties, for Mrs. Sidney sided with her son; at length a compromise was effected. A cavalry cadetship in the Company's service was offered, and accepted; and as soon as Dick had attained the *regulation* age, he was exported to the grand mart for portionless daughters and thriftless sons. Many and bitter were the tears poor Mrs. Sidney shed, on parting with her favourite child. I, too, wept redundantly; I am sure I can't tell why, for Dick had always treated me nefariously.

CHAPTER XXI.

By my troth, thou wilt never get thee a husband, if thou be so shrewd of thy tongue.—SHAKSPEARE.

I clasp'd her hand close to my breast,
  While my heart was as light as a feather;
Yet nothing I said, I protest,
  But—"Madam, 'tis very fine weather."

Then I follow'd her into the house,
  There I vow'd I my passion would try;
But there I was still as a mouse:—
  Oh! what a dull booby am I!—RITSON'S SONGS.

MARGARET, in the mean time, had entered on that career which, to Viola, had been fraught with sorrow and vexation: but for Margaret my sympathies were little interested: she, I felt, would, from the energy, or rather fearlessness of her character, steer her course triumphantly through every obstacle.

How shall I describe her? Bizarre, capricious, wild, fantastic, yet withal, generous, frank, and confiding; haughty, and, at times, insolent to her equals and superiors, yet condescending almost to familiarity with those beneath her in station; impatient of control, and headstrong when opposed, yet easily swayed by even the appearance of submission; startling you one moment by a profound knowledge of sciences generally considered beyond the scope of woman's intellect, perplexing you the next by a child-like ignorance of the commonest every-day topics of discourse; satirical more from exuberance of spirits,

than bitterness of disposition, Margaret Sidney was one of the most original, yet at the same time, least popular persons I have ever met with. By her own sex she was universally disliked; for women never pardon in each other the slightest tincture of eccentricity; and although followed, flattered, and admired by the men, none seemed anxious to appropriate to himself what each perhaps deemed might prove rather a dangerous possession. Poor Mrs. Sidney, herself the thrall of fashion, and bond-slave of decorum, was driven nearly wild by her daughter's wilful defiance of the Mede and Persian laws of society.

To Viola the eternal routine of dissipation in which her mother and sister had involved themselves, was most wearisome. Gladly would she long since have seceded from those gay assemblages; but at her mother's express desire she continued to accompany her to the "midnight dance, and public show," for Mrs. Sidney still entertained some visionary projects for her once beautiful and still interesting daughter—projects which Viola unwittingly nourished by her bearing in society, as, refusing to dance, she now invariably attached herself to that class of dowagers who, decked like an Indian idol, blaze forth resplendently in gems and gold, or passed the evening in earnest conversation with two or three little withered old gentlemen, who, as Margaret phrased it, looked exceedingly like shrivelled apples; from all which, Mrs. Sidney concluded, somewhat unadvisedly, that Viola would, in the end, marry a wealthy nabob.

And thus did Viola occasionally gain desultory tidings of Mr. Lyndham's proceedings; but unconnected, and unsatisfactory in the extreme proved the intelligence thus acquired, as, fearful of betraying herself, Viola was, as she imagined, most guarded in her interrogatories. This, indeed, might have been the case, although I have generally observed that young ladies, in their inquiries after absent lovers, greatly

resemble that wise bird the ostrich, who, when he buries his head in the sands, forgets that his whole body is exposed to the hunter's aim, and fancies that because he cannot himself see, he must be, of necessity, screened from observation.

Certain it is that Miss Brookes, after many a cross-examination, which would have done honour to a juvenile barrister, who, flushed with success at having obtained his first brief, is bent upon "astonishing the court," and forthwith fastens, with teeth and talons, on a trembling witness, in pretty much the same fashion as Grimalkin pounces on her helpless victim, and then lets it go for awhile, only to gripe it a little harder the next moment:—Miss Brookes, I say, having ascertained that Mr. Lyndham was, in some measure, instrumental to the estrangement of Viola and Lord Glenalbert, had furnished herself with a vast stock of miscellaneous gossip, for the most part tending to prove that Mr. Lyndham, so far from being inconsolable, was on the point of uniting himself with wealth and beauty. Miss Brookes was (Miss Sharpe, perhaps, excepted) the most gratuitously spiteful person it has ever been my lot to encounter: indeed, I am not quite sure that she could help it, for I sometimes think she was malevolent from temperament. Of one thing I am confident, that there are a set of persons in the world to whom malicious observations are indispensable, as being the means of preventing yet more critical ebullitions of temper. They act as does the safety-valve to the steam-boiler.

All these things considered, I did not give full credence to Miss Brookes' communications, although I certainly had not any superfluous reliance on Mr. Lyndham's constancy. But Viola, in the very spirit of her sex, auguring of his attachment from her own devoted love, gave but little heed to these reports. Alas! for the "unities of time and place;" I am quite sure they are very good things in their way, but I

never could understand them, so I shall now revert to Mrs. Sidney, and speak of her views with regard to Margaret. For once, there was something respectable in her maternal solicitude to see her daughter happily settled in life, for Margaret's vagaries might have disquieted a far more reasonable woman than Mrs. Sidney usually proved herself to be, although I did not think her choice the most felicitous imaginable when I heard her fix on Mr. Middleton, as one to whom she would most gladly intrust her daughter's future destiny.

Mr. Middleton was, when I first knew him, a solemn, and rather forlorn-looking individual of fifty, or perhaps "inclining to three-score;" but he was, at the same time, a most absolute gentleman, irreproachable in his demeanour, unexceptionable in his connections, and, for the most part, considered an undeniable acquaintance. His conversation was ponderous and uninviting, being at once exhaustless and exhausting. His commonest expressions took the form of apothegms, his most original observations were postulates. In the East, where wisdom is said to consist less in originality of ideas, than in a fluent application of the thoughts of others, Mr. Middleton would have ranked as a man of first-rate abilities, for he was well primed with quotations, both in prose and verse; and was in the habit of lavishly, and as I thought, unseasonably, decorating his discourse with them. To be sure, poor man, he had rather an overweening sense of his own importance, being most comfortably oblivious that the world had gone on in pretty much the same style before he made good his entry into it, and would, in all probability, remain *in statu quo* long after his bones were mouldering in the dust:

> "Like Dobbin, who around the globe would look,
> And his horizon for the earth's mistook."

Then too he was a sort of Mecænas in his way,

"Had seen Sir Walter's head, Lord Byron's hat,
And once with Southey's wife's third cousin sat."

And was himself literary after a formidable manner, having written a topographical essay on the site of some "lost land," and a philological treatise entitled "An humble attempt to prove what were the first English words ever spoken." His private fortune was considerable, and he held a lucrative situation in a public office, added to all which, civic dignities had been literally showered on him, and Mr. Sidney venerated him accordingly. This partiality was fully reciprocated by Mr. Middleton: he liberally bestowed on us all his leisure hours, devoting to our service every public as well as private holiday, dining with us whenever he was invited, volunteering his company in the evenings, and never failing to besiege our door as often as he happened to be passing our way. He was precisely what the Romans would have designated by the emphatic term, Musca.*

Mrs. Sidney was certainly quite right in imagining that Margaret was the attraction which drew Mr. Middleton thus frequently to our house. He was evidently much dazzled (as your solemn wiseacre is wont to be) by that half playful, half wayward vivacity, which formed so striking a feature in her character. Still, whether dumbfounded by her raillery, or unwilling to resign the privileges and irresponsibilities of bachelorship, he came, and went, and came again, seeming each day ready primed for the critical inter-

* It is consolatory to find, that "*Bores*" are not of very recent date, for we learn that even the Romans had a nickname for those who were guilty of inflicting on others the annoyance of undesired companionship: they called them Muscæ. It is to this, we presume, cousin Dorothy alludes in the text, although we cannot help observing, that we much fear the good lady is getting pedantic; surely she has not so soon forgotten her own vehement philippic against the sprinklers of science and smatterers in learning with which she favoured us at the commencement of this story.—ED.

rogatory, and each day retiring without having had courage to pass the Rubicon; and Margaret amused herself with making faces at him whenever his back was turned, and yawning profoundly as often as he addressed her; but wrapped in the callous hide of self-conceit, Mr. Middleton was impervious to, or rather unconscious of these pantomimic gestures. Even I, although quite certain of being haunted by compunctious visitings of conscience after his departure, was yet so much ruffled by his presence as to testify no small impatience when compelled to listen to his "serpentine and inveterately convolved" anecdotes: he was a kind-hearted man too. What a pity that he should have been so afflictingly prosy! Moreover, Mrs. Sidney began to weary of his interminable visits as years rolled on, and still Mr. Middleton did not propose.

CHAPTER XXII.

The merchant scant digested this,
That he so much must pay.

RITSON'S BALLADS.

Boast not to me the charms that grace
The finest form, or fairest face;
Shape, bloom, and feature I despise;
Wealth, wealth is beauty—to the wise.

Come then, Oh! come, and with thee bring
The thousand joys from wealth that spring;
Oh! bring the deeds of thy estate,
Thy quit-rents, mortgages, and plate.

HENRY CARTER.

I AM now about to speak of an event distressing in itself, but far more calamitous in its results. The head clerk of the establishment died. He was a man of an unassailable integrity, and self-forgetting probity.

Upwards of thirty years had he toiled indefatigably for the benefit of the firm; ever the first at the desk in the morning, and the last to leave it at night. It was but seldom that we met, yet he remains indelibly impressed on my memory. Even now I see him in my mind's eye, tall and gaunt in his person, with an herculean strength of frame—a man he was, who might have "danced equipped from head to foot in mail." Winter and summer alike, he wore a uniform suit of iron grey. It might be owing either to this circumstance or to his rigorous honesty, that he had received the sobriquet of the "iron chest," a cognomen which hung by him to the day of his death. No one ever dreamed of calling him by his patronymic, which was I think (for my memory is not quite accurate on this point) Macpherson. He had an earnest love of his vocation, maintaining, as he did, unflinchingly, that arithmetic was the key-stone of all science; and in an unwonted fit of enthusiasm, he would designate it a golden study, being happily unconscious that in so doing he was hovering on a pun. His was rather a love of the firm in the abstract, than any affection for the members thereof in the concrete. Had the names of Brown and Smith, been suddenly substituted for those of Brookes and Sidney, to him it would have made no difference; he would have felt only that he was still head clerk of the establishment, and that as such it behoved him to serve his patrons faithfully.

After his death a will was found legally signed and sealed, containing the following bequests. Twelve shillings per annum were settled on his favourite cat during her lifetime, for board and lodging; thirteen and ninepence ditto to the sweeper at the corner of the street where the counting-house was situated, (being the precise sum he had allowed him during the last fifteen years). Both these legacies were under the direction of Messrs. Brookes and Sidney, as trustees;

and finally the house of business was named as residuary legatee.

I think there might have been about one hundred pounds in cash, his watch and seals, and a richly chased tobacco-stopper. Never before had I seen Mr. Sidney so moved as on the death of this old and faithful servant. Adequately to supply his place was a task of no little difficulty; and when, from amidst numerous competitors, one was at length selected to fill the responsible office, what a rare contrast did he form to his predecessor!

Mr. Green Hoskins (for by this euphonious conjunction of names he persisted in being called) was a gentleman of noticeably small stature, and stout in proportion, I mean out of proportion; his complexion was remarkably dark for an Englishman, yet bearing an extreme polish; his head looked as though it had lately received the tonsure; but the few wandering hairs that time or the patent brush had spared, were collected in a small tuft on the very summit of his cranium, from whence they bristled forth like a scout on a barren eminence, being apparently only stationed there to spy out the nakedness of the land. He had a slow gliding step, a suspicious glance, and a flexible manner; his voice was almost inaudibly low, his words seemed to fall upon velvet, and he had an unreliable habit of dove-tailing with every opinion. He was finical in his dress, bechained and beruffled like any *petit maître*, the very moral of one who should say, "look and die." His handkerchiefs were always redolent of some overpowering perfume of his own manufacture; his wristbands were constantly drawn down over his knuckles (an unhappy practice this for one in his vocation, as witnessed the ink spots with which they were duly stained), and on the little finger of his left hand he wore a large diamond, or perhaps, paste ring, the stones of which formed the initial letters of his compound name, as though he chal-

lenged any to dispute with him the possession thereof.

Such as I have described him, Mr. Green Hoskins soon made himself most popular, both in the dwelling, and in the counting-house.

I cannot precisely explain how he contrived it; but certain it is, that, whilst the "iron chest" (notwithstanding his long services) dined with us once only in every term, in order that the balance-sheet might be freely discussed between the heads of the firm and their confidential clerk,—Mr. Green Hoskins, on the contrary, received an hebdomadal invitation; and, although James was the instigator of this civility, Mr. Sidney made no objections to it, neither, strange to say, did his wife; for the head clerk had insinuated himself surprisingly into her good graces, perhaps because he talked much of a lapsed baronetcy in his family, and had a dexterous knack of alluding to his brother, the member (although, by the way, there were many *sinister* reports afloat, amongst the inferior clerks, as to the legitimacy of this relationship), perhaps because he drew patterns for her embroidery, sorted her crewels, and matched the countless shades at her favourite shop in the city, thereby saving her many a tedious peregrination. Neither did his civilities stop here. He played tolerably on the flute, and deferentially offered to "accompany the young ladies, whenever business was over early." Nay, more; he volunteered giving lessons in arithmetic to Miss Sharpe; and, as he paid her infinitely more attention than she had ever received from any thing in the form of man, Miss Sharpe was transported; and I forthwith observed, that, whenever he was expected, she not only adorned her fair person with scrupulous precision, but was in the habit of granting Lucy a half-holiday, with full permission to spend it any where *but* in the school-room. The frigid Miss Sharpe was visibly thawing; never before had I seen her so gracious.

I thought then, and I still think, that Mr. Sidney, shrewd and observant as he was, and accustomed to probe men's motives to the quick, would scarcely have been deceived by this super-civility, and obtrusive attention on the part of his head clerk, had not his mind, at this time, been pre-occupied by affairs of the most pressing moment.

It would appear, that the firm of Brookes and Sidney had, for some time past, been in the habit of receiving anonymous communications, touching the solvency of a house in Hamburgh, with which our own had transactions to a considerable amount: but, to reports thus unaccredited, the English firm gave little heed, secure in the good faith, and long-tried integrity of their German correspondents; only when, in answer to a claim made on them by our establishment, the Hamburgh merchants sent a shuffling and voluminous reply,—and actually crossed and re-crossed their letter, in red and blue ink, after the fashion of an epistolary young lady—the English house took the alarm; and personally to examine into their affairs, before their credit should be publicly questioned, became a matter of urgent necessity. It was, I think, with rather selfish policy, that the house of Brookes and Sidney resolved (at whatever risk or inconvenience to the foreign establishment), on immediately closing their own account, thus precluding the German firm (who, by the way, were considerably in debt to our house) from all possibility of recovering their ground; or, in case of the worst, from compounding with their other creditors.

On Mr. Brookes, as incomparably the best linguist, all continental excursions had hitherto devolved; but, at the time of which I am now writing, he was suffering from indisposition, and strictly forbidden, by his physician, to risk the perils and fatigues of a voyage. There was some talk of sending James; but Mr. Sidney, although placing unlimited confidence in his son,

felt that the mission in question would require the utmost secresy, patience, and circumspection, qualities for which James was certainly not remarkable: and Mr. Sidney finally resolved upon going in person.

I am little skilled in the details of business, and therefore I shall condense within a few lines the transactions of many months.

Shortly after Mr. Sidney's departure, Mr. Brookes' indisposition assumed a more serious form, so much so, as totally to incapacitate him from attending to the business of the house. James was therefore now left entirely to his own devices. Aided and abetted by the head clerk, he plunged madly into the most hazardous speculations; these, as might be expected, failed; and in his anxiety to meet the pressing demands of needy adventurers, he granted bills on the house to a serious amount.

Mr. Sidney was detained far beyond the time he had calculated on; at length, however, he signified his intention of returning home. The day, too, was fast approaching when the bills would become due; and James saw with agony that there were not sufficient funds in his possession to meet the demand. But the misguided youth was well nigh driven to desperation when he found that the head clerk had suddenly eloped with a considerable sum of money. The alarm was not confined to the counting-house; it soon spread like wild-fire to our residence; for on the very evening of Mr. Green Hoskins' flight, Miss Sharpe was reported absent without leave. Great was the alarm, indefatigable the search; at length a return of "non est inventa" was given in by Marables, who looked brim-full of intelligence; and on being closely questioned by Mrs. Sidney, she deponed as to the fact of Miss Sharpe's having, for some time past, testified a vivid sense of Mr. Green Hoskins' attractions. Being further interrogated, declarant averred that Miss Sharpe had, one fine morning, left the house, attired in robes

of virgin white, and that she had, in the presence of two or three witnesses (of whom deponent was one) commuted her much-vaunted independence, for the privilege of bearing Mr. Green Hoskins' name. No wonder Miss Sharpe should have been ashamed of confessing her delinquency. She certainly was quite old enough to have known better. Neither was it surprising that Mr. Green Hoskins should have entailed on himself the care and protection of a wife, whose temper and person were alike considerably the worse for wear, Miss Sharpe having, truth to tell, a very pretty property, the united product of her own savings and of two small legacies, which had been bequeathed to her during her residence with the Sidneys; which property was vested in good government security. Neither arguments, persuasions, nor yet the tempting prospect of securing far higher interest for her money, could ever prevail on Miss Sharpe to place her property in the house of business; for she was, as I have before said, universally acknowledged to be a shrewd, sensible woman. How strange it is that your shrewd, sensible women should always, in the end, make fools of themselves! If any other excuse is wanting for Mr. Green Hoskins, let it be remembered that, at the time of espousing Miss Sharpe, he could scarcely have had the pleasing prospect of enriching himself at the expense of the firm. It was now clear to all parties that Mrs. Green Hoskins, like a faithful wife, had only followed the fortunes of her husband. I do not think we were any of us sorry to be quit of her.

But to return from this digression. On discovering Mr. Hoskins' defalcation, James Sidney seemed to lose all command of his feelings; and, finding himself unable to face the ruin he had caused, dreading to meet his father's rightful indignation, the young man fled to America (that modern Alsatia), leaving a farewell note for his distracted mother, and a detailed statement of his malversations, for his father's future guid-

ance. But little did this now avail; for when Mr. Sidney returned home, irritated at the dead loss which his house had sustained, owing to the failure of the Hamburgh merchants,—a failure so entire, that not even a dividend could in the end be expected from them; and when, too, this accumulation of misery burst upon him, and he learned the mad speculations of his trusted son, and the villany of his confidential clerk, no wonder that his energies were paralyzed, his faculties benumbed. There yet wanted two days to that on which the bills must be taken up, or the credit of the house lost for ever; and at any other time, Mr. Sidney, from his various resources, numerous friends, and high mercantile reputation, might indubitably have yet made head against the impending ruin, and honourably discharged the obligations which his son had entailed on the house. But now it was found impossible to rouse him; he moved as one in a dream; the advice and remonstrances of his friends fell alike unheeded on his ear; and it was soon bruited abroad that the bills of Brookes and Sidney had been noted for dishonour. The run on the house for the next few days was tremendous; and, before the end of the week, it was publicly announced that the firm had stopped payment. The senior partner was spared this final blow; he died suddenly on the very day that the bills became due, owing, as it was supposed, to the intelligence having been abruptly communicated to him; and his frame, enfeebled as it was by indisposition, proving incapable of sustaining the shock. In vain might I attempt to portray the scene which followed the announcement of the bankruptcy; vainly, too, might I essay to describe the stern and concentrated anguish of Mr. Sidney; the demonstrative grief of his wife; the ill-suppressed mortification of the high-spirited Margaret; the clamorous reproaches of Mrs. Brookes and her daughter; the tears that Lucy shed for others far more than for herself; or the calm

resignation with which Viola regarded their fallen fortunes.

All that Mr. Sidney had now to depend on was the generosity of his constituents; and these, for the most part, came forward with greater promptitude and liberality than might have been hoped for. All indeed seemed to compassionate the father, whilst they heaped reproaches and maledictions on the son. Many advised our retiring into the country, but neither Mr. nor Mrs. Sidney could endure the thought of leaving London, and we therefore engaged a very small lodging in that quarter of the metropolis which answers to the "no man's land" of a ship (a sort of neutral ground), being neither fashionable nor yet unfashionable, neither the city nor yet the west end, nor yet again what some have been pleased to designate the *terra incognita* of Bloomsbury and its vicinity; here did Mr. Sidney and his family first experience the stern truths and leaden realities of life, and heavily did they weigh on my cousin Charles's spirit. Servants were dismissed, all extraneous expenses curtailed, plate, furniture, horses, &c., were of course given up to the creditors, and I began seriously to consider where I might find an asylum for my declining years, as I felt I might now be regarded by my cousins in the light of an incumbrance. I therefore seized the first opportunity, when Mr. and Mrs. Sidney were alone, to impart to them my resolution; but no sooner had I broached the subject, than Mr. Sidney interrupted me, and said in his sternest manner, although the import of his words was very kind:

"Remember this, cousin Dorothy; whilst I have a roof over my head, and a crust of bread to eat, you shall be sheltered by the one, and share the other. You have been a faithful friend to me and mine in the days of our prosperity, and a grievous wrong would it be if we should cast you off in the time of adversity."

And Mrs. Sidney, looking up from her embroidery

frame, assured me in her warmest manner, that I should entail on them no additional expense, as in the event of my leaving, they should be forced to keep another servant.

Not many months after the failure, Margaret became the wife of Mr. Middleton. There was a delicacy and disinterestedness in his coming forward at such a period, which ought, and perhaps did, influence her in his favour; but I don't quite know,—I sometimes fear she accepted him from the sole motive of raising herself above what she was pleased to term a humiliating state of dependence. Certainly she could have had little respect for one whom she had been in the constant habit of designating dull as a November morning, and tedious as a Prussian law-suit. The disparity between them in years was great; but that of temper, inclinations, and pursuits was far greater, and often made me tremble for their future happiness. Mrs. Sidney did not participate in my anxiety; she only regretted, that, owing to their recent misfortunes, she could assemble no gay retinue of servants and carriages, or brilliant concourse of admiring friends, to celebrate her daughter's nuptials.

There is another person of whom I must say a few words before I lay down my pen for awhile. Marables, although of the "antique world," was scarcely one of those who "sweat for duty, not for meed;" she had been always something "between an hindrance and a help;" but since the bankruptcy, the former quality had preponderated to such a degree, that, on Margaret's marriage, Mrs. Sidney gladly acceded to Marables' proposition "of taking up her residence with *dear* Mrs. Middleton, for the remainder of her days." She is with her at this present time, and I often think, exercises rather an undue influence over her actions. Alas, for the woman who permits herself to be governed by her maid!

CHAPTER XXIII.

La monotonie dans la retraite tranquilise l'ame; la monotonie dans le grande monde fatigue l'esprit.

MADAME DE STAEL.

Why did I marry?

PROVOKED HUSBAND.

"HEUREUX le peuple dont l'histoire ennuie." If there be truth in this aphorism, it certainly would have been very difficult to find a happier family than ourselves during the six years which followed the bankruptcy, for any thing more "ennuyant" than our history during this same period would prove, is, I think, impossible to imagine. Our life was indeed monotonous in the extreme, one day being the echo of another; yet to Viola there was something inexpressibly soothing and tranquillizing in this unvarying routine, when compared with the forced excitement and joyless dissipation of the years that had preceded it. Happy she could scarcely be called, for in her father's gloomy and hopeless depression, in her mother's nervous irritability, in the dread uncertainty too under which she laboured as to her elder brother's welfare, nay more, his existence, when years rolled away without bringing any tidings of the fugitive,—in all this there was much to sadden her; at first, indeed, we had trembled for Mr. Sidney's reason, as, unmindful of all around him, he would sit for hours brooding over some visionary scheme; and then, starting abruptly from his chair, would ask wildly for his

hat and stick, and declare that "he must be off to the city, for that Brookes and the Iron Chest would be waiting for him." (It was strange that during these temporary aberrations he should never have alluded to either James or Hoskins.) In moments such as these, Mrs. Sidney, who, like the astute French monarch, drew a broad line of demarcation between falsehood and finesse, would endeavour to tranquillize her husband's mind by the assurance, that it was a public holyday, and consequently, there would be no business transacted by the house; but this stratagem, after a short while, failed to deceive, and when, on consulting his pocket-book, Mr. Sidney would detect the imposition that had been practised on him, his paroxysms of rage and desperation were fearful to behold. Viola then resolved on pursuing a totally different line of conduct; and placing herself one day next to her father, she entered into a detailed statement of the bankruptcy, pressed on his recollection every minute circumstance connected with his ruin, spoke of Mr. Brookes' death, dwelt on her brother's flight, and expatiated on Mr. Hoskins' perfidy; and then it was that Mr. Sidney threw his arms about his daughter's neck, and wept like a child; those were the first tears he had shed since his boyish days, and abundantly did they relieve his over-fraught heart. From that moment he was calm and collected, although he became the victim of a stern and settled despondency. He was such as I have described him in the opening chapter of this book.

In the midst of all these trials and sorrows, Viola found in her youngest sister a boundless source of consolation. Sacred and beautiful is the tie of sisterhood; holier, truer, firmer than that of friendship, inasmuch as it is of God's own linking! Never have I seen this bond more closely cemented than in Viola and Lucy Sidney. Theirs was, indeed, a "fair encounter of two most rare affections." On Lucy's side there mingled in the unlimited confidence and fearless

unreserve with which she imparted to Viola every thought of her heart, an almost filial reverence, a questionless submission to her sister's judgment; and there was something inexpressibly touching in the watchful tenderness and matronly anxiety with which Viola regarded that young and gentle girl. How often have I sighed, as I have listened to Viola's projects for Lucy's future destiny; how sedulously she meant to guard her from all evil; how resolved, that for her, at least, love should assume its gayest, fairest form. I sighed, for I remembered there was one for whom, in bygone days, I had indulged yet brighter visions; and how had they sped? Lucy was but fifteen at the time of the failure, and greatly did she resemble what Viola had been at the same age. She resembled her in symmetry of form, she resembled her, too, in the chiselled regularity of feature; but still there was wanting that infinite variety, that intermingling of the light and shadow of expression, for which Viola had been so remarkable. The difference between the sisters was as though you should place an elaborate and highly finished copy of one of the old masters next to the glorious, glowing, almost breathing original. In brilliancy of colouring, in the exquisite finish of the details, there might, perchance, be little perceptible difference between the pictures; but still we should vainly seek in the copy for that indescribable look of soul, which must be felt rather than defined: and yet there were not wanting many to affirm (and Mrs. Sidney was amongst the number) that Lucy was yet prettier than Viola had ever been. Prettier, perhaps, she was, but far less lovely.

Of Margaret we now saw but little; operas, balls, and fêtes engrossed her time, to the exclusion of every social duty and domestic tie. She had, on her marriage, commenced, with all the zeal of a newly-formed ministry, the reformation of what she was pleased to term the abuses of the home department.

Poor Mr. Middleton was sadly dismayed when he

found that his quiet, elegant bachelor dinners, with their faultless appointments, blameless cookery, and few select guests, were suddenly superseded by stifling, crowded banquets, at which the assembled company were far more numerous than the table would hold, the clatter of whose voices mingled, as he said, most inharmoniously with the pleasant jingle of the knives and forks; for Mr. Middleton had a favourite theory, that eating and talking were quite incompatible accomplishments. But he was driven wild when, in lieu of his evening conversazione, Margaret introduced the iniquitous diversion of a regular *bonâ fide* ball.

In vain Mr. Middleton declaimed, harangued, and dogmatised; Margaret alternately laughed and stormed, raved and ridiculed, yet ended by carrying her point victoriously. Rash, indeed, would have been the man who should attempt to compete with Mrs. Middleton in a war of words. If, as we are told, *gravity* is the source of that harmony which prevails in the universe, how unfortunate it was that it should have failed to attune the jarring interests of this ill-assorted pair; for *gravity* was indubitably the distinguishing feature in Mr. Middleton's character.

Seldom have I seen any one more entirely devoid of that subtle, delicate, intuitive qualification, ycleped *tact*, a qualification which, when possessed in perfection, may rank as an additional sense, and thus it was that, in the daily intercourse of life, Mr. Middleton blundered most wofully; he was for ever putting inopportune questions, making *mal à propos* observations, and pressing on every vulnerable point,—all this, too, with the kindest intentions imaginable. Moreover, he was *literal* in the extreme; when all around him were convulsed with laughter, Mr. Middleton's face was "dark as mourning weed," "the joke was beyond him." He was impervious to quizzing; irony he did not understand; the retort courteous, or discourteous, were alike thrown away upon him; the barbed shaft of

ridicule, however skilfully aimed, fell wide of the mark; the most brilliant repartee "flashed in the pan;" but worse than aught else, he would awake to the full force of a pun, at the very moment when the perpetrator thereof had forgotten that he had been guilty of so flagrant an enormity. Certain it is, that Mr. Middleton completely failed to fathom Margaret's character, and took everything that she said *au grand serieux*. Under more judicious management, Margaret might have been an intellectual companion and affectionate wife; as it was, she sought refuge from domestic altercation in a perpetual round of frivolity and dissipation: but far more culpable than this, she fell into that grievous error of making her husband the butt of her ridicule, forgetful that in so doing, she abased herself far more than she did him in the estimation of her friends. I will adduce but one instance; I might, alas! give several. Not many months after Margaret's marriage, I received a pressing invitation to pass the entire day with her: accordingly I went very early, but I found that the hours flew rapidly by, for she was in one of her most brilliant moods, now making scene after scene pass before my eyes as in a shifting panorama; now giving, in her usual half sportive, half caustic man ner, graphic sketches of all her new acquaintance; thus the time sped pleasantly, until we heard Mr. Middleton's knock at the street door.

"Oh, that's George!" said Margaret, in a tone that implied, "now he is come to interrupt us." "What can bring him home so early?" she added.

The next minute he entered the apartment; he bowed to me in his usual formal, and somewhat pompous manner; then placing himself opposite to his wife, he gave a slight preluding cough, which was succeeded by an oratorical flourish of his left hand, and, in a solemn didactic tone, he commenced as follows:

"It is with feelings of sincere, I might say heart-

felt anguish, that I find myself this day called upon to address you on a delicate and momentous subject, one to me of absorbing interest, inasmuch as it touches the honour of a man, dear to me as a friend, inestimable in every relation of life, whose private virtues are the faithful handmaidens of his public worth. But to the point. Can you charge your memory with having, on the evening of —— of ——" here Mr. Middleton was at fault, and he began anxiously turning over a multiplicity of memorandums, with which his pockets appeared to be well stowed.

I suppose I looked a little frightened, for Margaret took advantage of the pause to say to me, in a low tone, "Don't be alarmed, Dorothy; when Mr. Middleton begins in this way, we must make up our minds to it. It will come down slowly and steadily, like an autumn drizzle, and continue as many hours. Commend me to a good thunder-and-lightning storm of passion; then there might be some hopes of its exhausting itself; besides, that would at least have the good effect of clearing the atmosphere, whilst in the present case it will remain dense and dull as ever."

Mr. Middleton having, at length, rummaged forth a note, proceeded, "Can you recollect having, on Thursday last, the 30th ultimo, spoken disparagingly of Miss M'Evoy? Captain M'Evoy, who is, I find, related to the lady—[here again he had recourse to his note]—in the seventeenth degree, being present at the time, and seated at the north end of the whist-table—"

"Nay," said Margaret, "if this is to be a regular judicial examination, I claim an *imparlance;* besides we must have it in due form. I know the danger of a client's declaration; I refuse to plead in person. Cousin Dorothy, you shall be my counsel; here take this as my retaining fee, it is not worth much," and she threw her husband's picture towards me.

"I conclude," said Mr. Middleton, "that all this rhodomontade is only to gain time. I think your woman's wit might have stood you in better stead; when you have completely exhausted your legal jargon, I suppose I may expect a direct answer. Captain M'Evoy is not the only one of my guests whose feelings you have wounded. My old schoolfellow, Barlow, has declined my invitation for to-morrow; he says you stare him out of countenance;"—Margaret here laughed loud and long—"whilst my worthy brother-in-arms, Dr. Hervey, who served with me many years since in the local militia, declares that you quiz him so unmercifully, he is afraid to encounter you."

"Poor dear man!" observed Margaret, "how thin-skinned he must be; but, indeed," she added, "these gentlemen do me most cruel wrong; I have an exceeding respect for them. I look on them as noble vestiges of *antiquity*, venerable relics of the *olden* time, rare specimens of monastic architecture, in all its styles. Captain M'Evoy, with his weather-stained visage, his sturdy frame, and his huge columns of legs, may be likened to the massive Saxon. Doctor Hervey, with his Bardolph nose, rubicund complexion, and brocaded waistcoat, may, by a slight stretch of imagination, represent the florid Gothic; whilst that sexagenarian beau, your *ancient* schoolfellow, with his withered face, tottering gait, cosmetic arts, and shrunken frame, padded to look modern and youthful, may very well pass for the mixed and corrupt architecture of the succeeding ages, where you know symmetry was forgotten, and all the styles confounded."

"Margaret, you will be pleased to remember that these are my oldest friends."

"Why, yes, I don't well see how you could have any *older*," rejoined Margaret, flippantly.

But Mr. Middleton was unprovokable; and without getting in the slightest degree ruffled, he continued in the same slow, prosing style—"Do you purpose

tendering an apology to Captain M'Evoy, for your indiscreet and ill-advised expressions respecting his cousin?"

"'Pon my word," replied Margaret, "I am not now aware of what I did say, and I certainly do not purpose taxing my memory with it; only you may rely upon it, my information was correct, as I had the story from that prime authority and most veracious gossip, my 'very worthy and approved' good friend, the lively widow Dashwood."

"I believe, Margaret, you have before heard me say, that I have insuperable objections to your cultivating this lady's acquaintance: I now insist upon your declining all further intercourse with her. Although I speak thus mildly, you will find that I can be decided, and ——."

"'No ass so meek, no mule so obstinate,'" muttered Margaret; but she had the grace to say it in so low a tone, as to be almost inaudible.

"Not obstinate, but firm," rejoined Mr. Middleton; hearing, as I think, only the last word—"firm in a good cause you will ever find me."

"Ah, it is ever thus," replied Mrs. Middleton; "men stand godfathers to their own vices, and give them the name of virtues."

"And thus it is, I suppose," rejoined her husband, "that in the set in which you have lately chosen to mingle, the grossest crimes are glossed over under the insidious titles of indiscretions, *liaisons*, *amourettes*, &c. It is the pestilent error of the age in which we live, that men shame to name the deeds they do not shame to act; and thus, perhaps, is it, that the individual who, from the love of notoriety, runs counter to the world's prejudices, and indulges in petulant vagaries, and wild freaks, to the discomfort of all around her, thinks that she has shaken off the trammels, which are fit only to enslave vulgar minds, and glories in her independence."

"*Exempli gratiâ*, myself," said Margaret, archly, "I understand; but, indeed, George, that same society in whichy ou would have me move, your much-vaunted aristocracy of talent, inhabit a region far too exalted and ethereal for me; I dare not soar so high. You are a philosopher, therefore I need scarcely remind you, that in the world of nature the sun is deprived of its power of giving heat the instant we ascend into the rarity of upper space; now I would much sooner remain on *terra firma*, and be cheered by his warm beams, even though I should incur the risk of being stifled by mephitic exhalations."

"This may be very fine metaphor, but it is an odious sentiment, Margaret," replied her husband, appearing, for the first time, much irritated. "I am a dull man," he continued, "and consequently this flippant feathery style is thrown away on me; I require more weighty arguments."

"Indeed," rejoined Margaret, with her clear ringing laugh; "you surprise me, for I had always heard that a feather and a ball of lead descended with the same velocity, when dropped into a vacuum, so I thought that in your mind———."

Mr. Middleton waited not for the conclusion of her sentence, but abruptly left the apartment.

How very sorry I was to hear all this! I now earnestly besought Margaret to make some concessions to her husband, and especially to relinquish all society which was displeasing to him.

"Dear cousin Dorothy," she replied, "take my advice, and never interfere between husband and wife; it is a thriftless office; you incur the enmity of one party, and have the thanks of neither; besides, you know well, that I never yet yielded to compulsion, unless, indeed, it was to a masterful majority: and as to my friend, Mrs. Dashwood, the worst that can be said of her is, that she is somewhat volatile and extravagant; besides, I am pretty much of Cæsar's

opinion, that it is better to be the first person in a village, than the second at Rome; and credit me, I reign supreme in my own little sphere: besides, Dorothy, I have not yet given up all hopes of taming Mr. Middleton; 'in time, the savage bull doth bear the yoke:' but I pray you," with most petitionary vehemence she continued, as I now rose to depart, "I entreat you to stay dinner; I will order it directly, for this keen encounter of our wits has somewhat sharpened my appetite: indeed, Dorothy, I promise to keep the peace during the remainder of the evening;"—but I would not stay; and it was long, very long, before I again consented to pass an afternoon with her.

Truly has it been observed, that "freedom of expression and manner are by no means a proof of laxity of morals;" and I am very certain that it would have been impossible to find any person more essentially correct in her conduct, or of purer mind, than Margaret Middleton; still, as I heard of her being constantly surrounded by a set of butterfly youths, whispering their fade, unmeaning gallantries in her ear, I could not help wishing that she would act more in the spirit of the following beautiful lines,—lines which I think every woman ought to have graven on her heart's core:

> Let this great maxim be my virtue's guide:
> In part, she is to blame that has been tried—
> He comes too near who comes to be denied.

Margaret, unfortunately, piqued herself on defying the world, and the world (mighty abstraction though it be) never suffers itself to be braved or slighted with impunity; and so I believe Mrs. Middleton found, to her cost, when, after the lapse of a few years, she appeared to be gradually losing "caste" in society.

All these things considered, there could scarcely have been found a less fitting chaperon for a girl like

Lucy; yet Mrs. Sidney could not endure that a daughter of hers should be compelled to "blush unseen, or waste her sweetness on the desert air;" and as many circumstances precluded her from personally escorting her daughter, it was finally agreed that Margaret should act as her proxy; and, at the age of seventeen, Lucy was fairly launched into society. I confess I trembled, for Lucy had one of those malleable characters which are peculiarly open to the first impression, but which having once received the stamp, retain it indelibly. Her disposition was gentle and affectionate, but she had little energy of mind, or strength of character, and far less natural or acquired talent, than either of her sisters. She was the least clever, as Margaret was the least beautiful of the family.

But I soon found I had little cause for uneasiness: Lucy's heart was in her home, her tastes were simple her occupations and pleasures alike domestic, and she shrunk from the career which was now open to her; indeed, such was her distaste, that after attending two or three balls, she wept so bitterly, and petitioned so vehemently to be allowed to spend her evenings in the accustomed manner, that Mr. Sidney interfered, and desired that she might be permitted to follow the bent of her own inclinations. This was all-sufficient with Mrs. Sidney, who knew, from experience, that the slightest contradiction to her husband's will had now an alarming effect on his health and spirits; but she indemnified herself for this restraint on her feelings, by venting querulous complaints, of which I was, for the most part, the chosen, although rather unwilling, auditor.

"And so," she would say to me, "I have now given up all hopes of Lucy's ever marrying. What will become of her and Viola, when Charles and I are gone? Ah, Dorothy, you cannot picture to yourself the feelings of a mother at the prospect of leaving her children friendless and portionless in the wide world;

for although I do not doubt that Mr. Middleton would, in case of the worst, afford them an asylum, yet those unfortunate bickerings between him and Margaret would render it anything but a pleasant home for Viola and Lucy;" then after a pause, during which she had been busily employed in working over a spoilt leaf in her embroidery, Mrs. Sidney continued —"I sometimes think, Dorothy, for a person of your neglected education, you are astonishingly often right in your observations; I remember that you used to say riches, and the luxuries of life, were not at all indispensable to Viola's happiness; and truly, when I see how wonderfully she has accommodated herself to our change of circumstances—how cheerfully, too, she has relinquished all her little elegant pleasures and accomplishments,—I begin to think there was some truth in your remark. I am sure that could I have foreseen all that has since come to pass, I would gladly have permitted her to marry some one or other of her numerous suitors, whom she might, perchance, have preferred to Lord Glenalbert; for I cannot help imagining, that some prior attachment must have been the cause of her breaking off so advantageous a match; only, to be sure, I have never known Viola act deceitfully towards me, and, if you remember, Dorothy, I asked her at the time of Lord Glenalbert's declaration if she had any prior attachment, and she solemnly assured me to the contrary. It has always been a complete mystery to me; the more especially as I have frequently thought Charles knew something of the matter; if so, he has kept it a profound secret. I am sure I have never concealed anything from Charles, and he certainly need not have been afraid of trusting me."

I did not answer Mrs. Sidney, for I was thinking how worse than vain were all these retrospections, and was reflecting how surely, if the time were to come over again, Mrs. Sidney would act in the self-same

manner, when I was startled from my reverie by hearing her exclaim, in a tone of real anguish, "I am sure no mother need envy me my feelings; bereft as I am of both my sons, the one a fugitive, the other an exile in a strange land. That James yet lives, I cannot for one instant doubt, but I dare not pray for his return whilst his father continues so implacable, and declares that he will never see him again: but what cuts me to the heart, Dorothy, is, that I fear Dick has forgotten me, it is so long since we have heard from him."

Mrs. Sidney here wept uncontrolledly, and it was some time before I could console her. These outpourings of grief were, however, very rare; and, although indulging from time to time in fruitless lamentations, Mrs. Sidney was, in reality, far happier than she could be induced to think herself; and day by day she was getting more accustomed to the many privations incidental to her loss of fortune.

But I now bethink me, I have quite forgotten to mention how the blameless Mrs. Brookes and her daughter have sped, since the bankruptcy. The fact is, that immediately after that calamitous event, Mrs. Brookes signified to Mr. Sidney, in no very scrupulous language, her determination of breaking off all intercourse with a family whom she said she should "always regard as the murderers of her ever-to-be-lamented husband." This estrangement did not occasion us any very deep anxiety.

We afterwards incidentally heard that Mrs. Brookes had supplied her ever-to-be-lamented spouse's place greatly to her own satisfaction, and that Miss Brookes, having quarrelled with her new papa, had established herself as humble companion to some dowager marchioness or countess, whose name I have forgotten. How Miss Brookes—who had been in the constant habit of exalting her own judgment into an arbitary standard, from which she permitted no appeal,—how

she—who would have maintained to her dying day, that "the shield was all of gold," sooner than she would have been persuaded to view the opposite side—how she, I say, could have filled this same situation (which Madame de Maintenon has felicitously designated the "task of amusing the unamusable,") with satisfaction to either herself or her patroness, is a problem which I have never had an opportunity of solving. But digressions in writing are as tedious as the garrulous narratives of old age, or, ——'s speeches in the house, so I hasten to retrace my steps.

Thus, as I have said in the commencement of this chapter, without any incident to vary the monotony of our lives, six years passed away. To me this period seemed a resting-place in the journey of life; to Viola and Lucy Sidney it was a time of "calm and sinless peace." Why, why was it of such short duration? or rather, why was it succeeded by . . . . . but I must not anticipate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

My eyes are dim with childish tears;
My heart is idly stirr'd:
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

WORDSWORTH.

MARGARET having one morning, by dint of persuasions, remonstrances, and raillery, prevailed on Viola and myself to accompany her to a public exhibition of pictures, we set forth at an early hour, in order that we might avoid the concourse of persons who would be attracted thither at a later period of the day; but Margaret, with her usual heedless inconsideration of the feelings of others, had contrived, by loitering on the way, straying into shops, and keeping up a lively and continuous chat with every individual of her

acquaintance whom she chanced to meet, so to prolong the time, that we reached our place of destination at the very hour which the votaries of fashion seem, by one accord, to have selected for their daily lounge. The rooms were, therefore, crowded to excess, and fatigued by my ineffectual efforts to obtain a satisfactory view of the pictures, I turned my attention from the ideal representations of loveliness, to the animated beauties by whom I was surrounded; and pre-eminent amongst these, appeared a very elegant young woman, who was leading by the hand a remarkably pretty child of about four years old, whose observation she was, as I thought, vainly endeavouring to attract towards the pictures. The lady was tall, her figure slightly inclining to *embonpoint*, her complexion radiantly fair, her eyes of a bright scintillating blue, and her hair of that pale golden tint which time out of mind has excited the rhapsodies of poets and lovers. To me, at least, she seemed the very perfection of northern beauty.

"How very absurd it is to show off a child at these kind of places," observed Margaret, who was evidently much disconcerted that she had not brought her own little girl to share in the tribute of admiration which was so lavishly bestowed by the assembled company on that beautiful child; at my request, however, she asked an exquisite who was hovering near her if he were acquainted with the name of my fair incognita.

"'Pon my word, I ought to know," lisped the youth, "but my memory is so inhospitable; I saw both her and her husband almost every day last year, when I was in Italy; they were considered quite a pattern pair; the lady, in particular, was most exemplary in her devotion, and as she was very much the fashion at Rome, all the Italian ladies began imitating so fair an example; husbands rose to an extraordinary premium, whilst *cavalieri serventi* were quite at a discount. It really was as singular as it was refreshing, to witness

such conjugal affection after a union of four years, for so long I understood they had been married."

"And can't you remember her name?" said Margaret; "how very stupid you must be."

"Really, Mrs. Middleton, I am greatly indebted to you for your very flattering opinion," replied the disconcerted beau, who evidently thought he had been most particularly brilliant during the last few minutes "however," he continued, "I can inform you thus much, she is the daughter of a Scotch duke, the Duke of Teviotdale, I think, but I'll see if I can learn her name for you:" so saying, he walked away; I did not await his return, for I now crossed the room to Viola, whom I had observed standing for the last quarter of an hour before a small picture, on which she was gazing intently. Knowing as I did her exquisite taste in painting, I was prepared to see something very beautiful, but on looking at the picture I was far more perplexed than delighted. It represented a distant view of the ocean, the waters of which were of a dark yet singularly vivid blue, the sun was sinking behind the lofty hills in "one unclouded blaze of living light." The surrounding country was wild, grand, and unquestionably foreign; such also was the costume of the solitary figure in the foreground of the landscape: so far all was beautiful and in keeping, yet was I sorely puzzled to account for that indescribable English air which pervaded the attitude, which betrayed itself in every lineament of the hero of the picture. I turned to the catalogue, where I found only the words "Portrait of a gentleman in the costume of the Corsair," and I was smiling within myself at the palpable discrepancy which the slight form, light hair, and eyes of the individual before me presented to the poet's description, when suddenly I was struck with some vague recollections to which I vainly strove to assign any particular association, yet it seemed to me that, at some former period of my life, I must have looked on that picture;

and I was on the point of applying to Viola for information, when the little girl whom I had before noticed suddenly rushed past me, and springing towards the picture, exclaimed, "There's papa! papa!"

The beautiful young woman whom I had previously remarked slowly made her way through the crowd, and advanced to the very spot where Viola and I were standing; she was now leaning on the arm of a gentleman. I looked at him,—could it be? I thought,—but no, he was much stouter and older too, and the hair had worn away from the temples and the crown of his head. I perceived all this at a glance, for the little girl, on springing eagerly into his arms, had knocked his hat to the ground. I could not move, my feet seemed firmly planted to the ground, and I listened with breathless earnestness to each word that fell from their lips.

"I told you how it would be," said the lady, "she knew it instantly,—you see it *must* be like."

"Indeed then it was very clever of you, my little Mary," observed the father affectionately, as he placed the child on the ground, and parted the clustering locks which were now shading her eyes; "it was very clever," he repeated, "to recognize me in that foolish masquerade attire; I am sure I look like a merry Andrew; but you would have it so, Elizabeth."

"And was not that the dress," said the lady, "in which I first saw you at the marchesa's fancy ball?"

There was something of almost adulatory tenderness in the tone of voice in which these words were uttered: that tone in which I love to hear a man address a woman, especially if that woman be his wife; but which, to me at least, has in it something singularly disagreeable, when, as in the present case, the relative position of the parties is reversed.

Had there been any thing wanting to convince me that Lord Glenalbert stood before me, I could not have failed to recognise him, as I marked the more

than national horror of attracting observation which he evinced, as he said, "My dear Elizabeth, we shall be laughed at; these pretty speeches were all very well in the land of love and song, but here they will infallibly expose us to ridicule."

I now looked at Viola, she was alarmingly pale: from the moment of Lord Glenalbert's approach she had been vainly striving to force her way through the crowd; but she could not do so without incurring the risk of attracting his observation, which she seemed sedulously to avoid. On the side opposite to that which Lord Glenalbert occupied, we were completely hemmed in, owing to the next picture to the "Corsair" being the *chef d'œuvre* of the exhibition. It represented the interior of an anatomist's study, where "dead men's rattling bones, and reeky shanks, and yellow chapless skulls," were strewn about in ghastly profusion; this picture was the grand focus of attraction, the ladies, in particular, although vehemently protesting that "it was far too shocking to look at," were yet clustering round it with indefatigable perseverance. To pass on that side was therefore impracticable; but Viola, now bending low her head, endeavoured to glide hastily by Lord Glenalbert; he saw her anxiety, and politely moved his little girl out of her way; in doing so he looked intently at her, but quickly turned his face away with the expression of one who silently acknowledges that he is mistaken. Viola was now passing rapidly on, when Margaret, who was at the opposite end of the apartment, exclaimed in her usual careless way (too careless, alas! she was of appearances), "Viola, do come and look at this picture." Immediately Lord Glenalbert was at Viola's side, and pouring forth questions, trivial in themselves, yet were they uttered in that tone of deep interest in which a man never fails to address the woman whom he has once sincerely loved. I heard him ask after every member of her family, even "Cou-

sin Dorothy" was not forgotten. I must say I thought this rather strange, for I was at that very moment standing close beside him: I could see indeed that Lord Glenalbert was much aged,—I could see too that Viola was sadly changed, yet I did think that those fourteen years had passed very lightly over my head,—I certainly did not fancy that I was much, if at all, altered; I would have given worlds to say, "Don't you know me, my lord?" but I felt that I should burst into tears if I spoke.

Lord Glenalbert now addressed his wife, and said, "Elizabeth, this is Miss Sidney."

Lady Glenalbert stooped down and untied and tied the strings of her child's bonnet three or four times consecutively.

"Elizabeth, my love," said Lord Glenalbert, in rather a louder tone, "allow me to introduce you to Miss Sidney."

Lady Glenalbert curtseyed as slightly as it was possible for her to do without actual incivility; and Viola returning her salutation in a hurried manner, passed quickly on to where Margaret stood.

"Why, Glenalbert, you told me she was handsome," said Lady Glenalbert, in a tone half petulant, half triumphant.

"She is much altered," replied Lord Glenalbert very gravely, "I should scarcely have known her;" then placing his little girl on his shoulder, he said, "Come, my little Mary, we will have a race down stairs, and see if mamma can overtake us."

"Mamma's so fat, she can't run," exclaimed the little girl, as she clapped her tiny hands with delight, whilst Lady Glenalbert followed with a stately, and, as I thought, somewhat sullen tread; the corners of her beautiful mouth, too, were rather drawn down.

And so they vanished from my sight.

I have never seen them since.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Though other ties be snapp'd in twain,
And those we both lov'd long be gone;
As we did part, we'll meet again
With none of our affection flown.

A. H. P.

ALAS! this aching head, this throbbing heart, this trembling hand, that scarce can guide my pen, these quivering nerves, this sinking frame, for which even life itself does seem too heavy a burden,—these tell me in language whose eloquent "meaning needs not the aid of speech," that for me the leech's skill would be exerted all in vain. A little while, and I shall be laid on that bed (where but a short time since I passed so many weary hours), never again to rise therefrom. For thy sake, Viola, I could have wished to live, for thou I know wilt weep for me, as friend has never wept for friend; and busy memory, with fond delusive art, will picture me to thee in colours all too bright and fair!

Much am I tempted to bequeath to thee (I have naught else to leave) this faithful record of my feelings; then shalt thou know, when I am gone, how dear thou wert to me, who never knew one dearer . . . . . but no—it may not be; for I have herein too freely spoken of those whose very foibles should be sacred in thy sight; then be not mine the hand to lift the veil which thou I know with filial reverence hast ever thrown o'er their errors; no, rather shall this

MS. be laid by my side in the grave, and never, never may its least guarded sentiments rise up in judgment against me! It has beguiled many a weary hour, and banished many a "vexing thought;" and even now will I continue it awhile, for in so doing I shall be thinking, musing, writing of thee, Viola.

Who that has studied the foregone histories of his fellow-men, or turned his retrospective glance upon his own past life, but must have observed how surely, after a period of unwonted tranquillity, do events, whether for good or evil, crowd upon each other with bewildering rapidity, tread, so to say, upon each other's kibes. Thus, perhaps, was it that only a few months after our interview with Lord Glenalbert, as we were sitting together one evening in full conclave, absorbed in our various occupations, a letter was handed to Mrs. Sidney, which the servant said had been left by a man in an outlandish dress, whom she believed to be an Indian; Mrs. Sidney looked at the superscription, and shrieked, rather than exclaimed, "It is from Dick; he must be in England; open it Dorothy, and read it quickly."

This, however, was no easy task, as Dick was far from being a proficient in the art of caligraphy. I soon convinced Mrs. Sidney that her son could not be in England, as the letter was dated from Calcutta. Dick commenced, as usual, with a fine tirade against existing authorities, complaints of the rascality of the natives, bemoanings over the deterioration of the times, vehement lamentations concerning the clippings of pay, reductions of income, &c., and mingled threats and bewailings as to the injustice with which he had been treated. Then he continued as follows (there is rather an undue economy of particles, but I copy his style verbatim): "And so, my dear mother, you complain of my long silence—think I have forgotten you—no such thing—fact is, never could spin a long yarn,

especially about self. The bearer of this letter (who has been a kind friend to me) will give all particulars anent your humble servant; he will tell you that I have been dangerously ill—am now quite recovered—stouter and heartier than ever,—but perhaps he will forget to tell you, that, under Providence, I owe my restoration to the care he took of me—had no claim upon him—is not one of us—by which, I mean, does not belong to our regiment. The fact is, I was quite tired of being sent further and further up the country—brought to my mind 'Goldsmith's Deserted Village,' and Mr. Strickland's school. 'Horesco referens'—got leave of absence, and away I scudded to Calcutta—famous fun—government-house—fancy balls—theatricals. Introduced by a mutual friend to Mr. Lyndham (the bearer of this letter)—accompanied him and others to a distant part of the country, on a tiger-hunting expedition—would not go upon an elephant, as did all the rest—thought it inglorious—so mounted upon horseback—contrived to get seriously hurt—was conveyed back again to Calcutta—taken in by Lyndham—spent six months at his house—princely establishment—splendid fortune—liberal fellow—high in his profession—has gained '*golden* opinions from all sorts of people'—somewhat too grave and bookish for me. And now, my dear mother, I have a favour to ask. Mr. Lyndham is returning to England, after many years' absence; I therefore beg, that for my sake, you will show him every civility. Whilst he remains in London, let your house be his home—at least, until he establishes himself to his entire satisfaction. Only I caution you not to have any spec upon him—won't do—slip through your fingers—he something resembles that chivalrous hero of whom Viola used to sing, who 'loved and who rode away, away;' at least, there are many strange rumours afloat here of his inconstancy. Fickleness, thy name is man! By the bye, he seems to have known some of you in former days; and,

'albeit unused to the *merry* mood,' laughed heartily when I told him of the tricks I used to play old Dorothy. How is she?—rum touch she was, to be sure; —I mean, if ever I have a windfall to send her an Indian shawl, to fence her from the rheumatism—tell her so, with my love.

"No time for any flourishing valedictory messages.

"Believe me to be,

"Your inestimable Son,

RICHARD *Cœur-de-Lion* SIDNEY.

"P.S. Lyndham purposes 'hanging out' at the Clarendon; you must make the advances, as he is full of a thousand whimsical crochets about intruding, *&c., &c.*"

As I finished reading, Viola left the room, and Mrs. Sidney exclaimed, "Of course we must pay him every attention. I am sure we can never sufficiently evince our sense of the kindness he has shown to Dick. Oh, Charles, if you would but call upon him; at least we must make an exception in his favour, and ask him to dinner. I shall write directly, and entreat that he will favour me with a visit to-morrow. Just look again at the letter, Dorothy, and see what Dick says about his friend having known us in former days. Lyndham was, I think, the name you ——"

"Lyndham," interrupted Mr. Sidney, suddenly starting from a reverie; "surely I have heard that name before, but where or when I know not. There is only one subject now, on which my memory never fails me."

"Oh! Charles, Charles," resumed his wife, "what is the use of always reverting to your misfortunes? I wish you could bring to your mind who this Mr. Lyndham is." Mrs. Sidney mused awhile, and then said, "Perhaps Margaret knows: very likely, he was one of her countless flirts before her marriage."

I was very glad that no one thought of applying to

me for information; and, availing myself of the first pause in the conversation, I left the apartment, in order that I might seek for Viola. I found her, as I expected, in her own room; but scarcely was I prepared for the scene that met my view. She was kneeling before a large, old-fashioned chair, her arms were resting on it, and her face was concealed in her hands.

"Viola," I said, but she did not heed me. "Viola," I repeated, and she sprang from the ground, and threw her arms about my neck. It was long ere she could speak, and when, at length, that tumultuous rush of feeling (which seems for awhile to make the heart pause, and to stem the even current of the blood) found its vent in words, I easily perceived that no fears or doubts of Mr. Lyndham's constancy chequered the enthusiastic joy with which she hailed his return. The frequent reports of his fickleness which had been, from time to time, whispered in her reluctant ear, and which were confirmed by her brother's letter,—these, I found, she regarded only as the struggles of a heart which had vainly striven to free itself from a hopeless passion, but which, after every unsuccessful effort, had returned to its first and only love. I gazed on her as she spoke. Her cheeks were flushed as I had not seen them for many long years, her eyes were animated with hope, the pulse of existence was beating high with joy. I could not find it in my heart to croak forth the raven's boding note, so I left her to indulge her own bright and glowing dreams. On my return to the drawing-room, I found that Mrs. Sidney, who rather prided herself on "l'eloquence du billet," had penned one of her most persuasive notes to Mr. Lyndham, entreating that he would favour her with a call early on the ensuing morning. But our *ménage* now only consisted of two maid-servants, neither of whom was at the time available, so Mrs. Sidney was constrained to wait until the morrow before she could despatch her letter, and then

greatly to her disappointment, she was informed that Mr. Lyndham had slept at the Clarendon the previous evening, but had early that morning taken his departure for the south of England. It was added, however, he was expected back shortly, and Mrs. Sidney's letter should be given him immediately on his arrival. This, I thought, argued ill for Viola's buoyant expectations; surely, I reflected, if Mr. Lyndham had been anxious to see her again, he would have awaited the result of Dick's letter; for I could scarcely believe him to be ignorant of the favourable mention of himself, which was therein contained. Viola entertained a different opinion: she argued that it was just like her brother, to write without communicating the contents of his letter, or even waiting to ascertain whether those contents might be agreeable to him who formed the chief subject of them. Besides, she added, he remembers the scorn and contumely with which, in former days, my father received his overtures, and he doubtless shrinks from exposing himself to similar treatment.

Alas, for Viola! Alas for her who was usually so clear-sighted, whose judgment was wont to be so penetrating, so calm, so collected! How must her reasoning powers have been now biassed by her feelings, her mind warped by pre-conceived notions; or how could she thus have forgotten that little cause had the wealthy Anglo-Indian now to fear a contemptuous reception from the bankrupt merchant? The mention of Mr. Lyndham's departure for the south of England affected her strangely.

"Was he, then, she asked a thousand times during the day, "was he staying at Turretcliff—had his friendship for Frank Herbert continued during that long lapse of years—was it probable that Lady Sarah, who had slighted her, would receive him again under her roof; and if so, could he view with indifference scenes and persons which must be associated in his

mind with a period of deep and thrilling interest? She believed, from her own feelings, that it was impossible it should be so. Yet, as weeks passed away, and Mr. Lyndham still continued to absent himself, I perceived, with anxiety, that her brow again wore an expression of anxious thought, that her step was less springy, and her spirits had become varying and unequal.

CHAPTER XXVI.

At the first sight
They have changed eyes.

SHAKSPEARE.

Not the pangs of hope deferr'd
My tormented bosom tear :—
On the tomb of hope interr'd
Scowls the spectre of despair.

MONTGOMERY.

It was the third of September,—I remember it well by this same token, that it was Viola's birthday—Margaret's two children were spending the afternoon with us, and more turbulent, seditious, riotous little beings it would be impossible to imagine; a second edition were they of Margaret and Dick; but, alas! neither "revised nor *corrected*." The boy had even a trick of Richard's face! Mrs. Sidney, with the two-fold feeling of maternity strong at her heart, was yet so deafened by their tumultuous proceedings, as fain to ensconce herself in a distant corner of the apartment, where, seated behind her huge embroidery-frame, she was effectually screened from their view, and sheltered from their attacks. Wearied out by my ineffectual efforts to amuse them, I, too, had retired from the immediate scene of action, and leaning my aching head upon my hand, watched their

gambols as they were now victimising Viola and Lucy, to their hearts' content.

At that moment, notwithstanding all my partial love for Viola, I could not but be forcibly struck by the remarkable contrast which the sisters presented to each other. Lucy was seated on the ground, and the little girl having taken out the comb from her long hair, it was floating around her in luxuriant profusion: very lovely she looked, as in the full glow of youth and health, and vigour, she was romping and laughing with the child, and, child-like, was she enjoying the exuberant mirth of the moment. The little boy, seeing his sister so well employed, was bent upon amusing himself in like manner, and clambering up the back of Viola's chair, he endeavoured to dispossess her of her cap, in order that he might pull down her hair. This, however, Viola strenuously resisted; but the boy, who was an infant Hercules, had succeeded in pushing it over her brow, and in disarranging her curls, until they fell in dishevelled masses over her eyes, giving to her faded and careworn countenance a peculiarly forlorn appearance, for Viola had arrived at that period of life when a woman is ever more or less dependent upon the adventitious aid of the toilette. The din had now reached its climax, for the little boy, rendered violent by opposition, had begun to scream most vigorously, in which satisfactory exercise of the lungs he was soon joined by his sister, who seemed fired with a laudable spirit of emulation, and wisely resolved upon not suffering herself to be outdone in an exploit strictly feminine. So great was the uproar, that a knock at the street-door was unheeded by any of the party, and I started as I felt the sleeve of my gown violently pulled, and heard the voice of the maid-servant loudly proclaiming in my ear, "A gentleman, ma'am." I looked up, and, wrapped in his travelling-cloak, his hat drawn as usual over his brow, I saw the tall form of Mr. Lyndham standing a few paces within

the doorway. His eagle eye shot a keen glance around, but I observed that his gaze fastened upon Lucy, who, now first perceiving him, rose from the floor, deeply blushing beneath that fixed regard. The children's shrill voices were instantaneously hushed; the little girl flew to me, whilst her brother hid his face in Viola's lap.

Mr. Lyndham now quickly advanced towards Lucy, and exclaimed, "Have years so changed me, Viola, that you should fail to recognise me?"

"You mistake me," said Lucy, colouring yet more deeply; "there is Viola."

His countenance fell; he did not approach her, but he remained for a second transfixed to the spot, whilst the expression of his eye spoke plainer than words, "Can that wreck be indeed Viola Sidney?"

A pang of almost spasmodic agony seemed, for a moment, to convulse Viola's features; but it was *only* for a moment, and disengaging herself from the child's tenacious grasp, she advanced to Mr. Lyndham, and, extending her hand to him, said, and her voice faltered not as she spoke—"You think Lucy like me, Mr. Lyndham; she is generally considered so: like what I was," she added, in a tremulous accent, but quickly recovering herself, continued, "I claim the privilege of an old acquaintance; you must allow me to introduce you to my mother."

Mrs. Sidney had been so intently absorbed in her occupation, as to be, for a few moments, unaware of the presence of a stranger; she now, however, hastily pushed aside her embroidery-frame, and in another second was seated by Mr. Lyndham, pouring forth questions respecting her son's well-doing and well-being, which were answered by him in the kindest and most considerate manner. After having satisfied Mrs. Sidney as to her son's perfect convalescence, Mr. Lyndham was about to take his leave, but Mrs. Sidney importuned him so earnestly to stay dinner,

that, after innumerable excuses, which were as constantly overruled, he suffered himself to be prevailed upon.

Never did that resolute power of self-control, for which Viola was so remarkable, shine forth more conspicuously than on this eventful evening. I listened to her with astonishment, as I heard her taking part in the general conversation; and, when called upon to do so, addressing Mr. Lyndham in that tone of calm and even friendly interest, with which common acquaintances are wont to accost each other. At first there was evident constraint in his manner; but quickly following her lead, he shook off his embarrassment, and availing himself of his almost unrivalled conversational powers, seemed bent upon allowing no time for personal allusions, or inopportune reflections to obtrude themselves. In this feat he was greatly aided by Margaret, who, having returned suddenly from a fashionable watering-place, where she had been passing the last two months, had volunteered her company at dinner; and less, I think, from the love of display than from that collision of minds, that stimulus which one eminent talker ever affords to another, she was firing repartee after repartee, and keeping up the ball of conversation with unwearied spirit. Even Mr. Sidney seemed, on that evening, to forget his griefs; and, for the first time since the bankruptcy, I detected, ever and anon, a smile lurking in the corner of his mouth.

It was late when Mr. Lyndham took his departure, and I observed that Viola listened without emotion to the tribute of admiration which Margaret lavishly bestowed on what she laughingly termed his *societarian* powers; calmly too did she hear her mother unhesitatingly pronounce him "the most delightful person whom she had ever encountered;" and she gently smiled as Lucy declared, that "when she looked upon him, her imagination floated back to the days of

knights and paladins, of romance and song, and chivalry." I must own that I was completely deceived by Viola's manner, and, long after they had all retired to rest, I sat ruminating over the probable causes that might perchance have induced a change of sentiment. Had she, I thought, like him, been shocked by the personal ravages which time had made? but no, I felt this was impossible, for Mr. Lyndham was not in the least altered. Before his departure, he had, like many men of his dark complexion, looked some ten or fifteen years older than his actual age; and now time, with a fine sense of retributive justice, was making him due reparation, for Mr. Lyndham certainly did not appear to have aged one single year since last I saw him; besides, I could not but mentally acknowledge that had he come among us bent and emaciated, wretched and poverty-stricken, Viola's devoted affection would have known no diminution, perhaps it would rather have strengthened her love.

In manner, too, Mr. Lyndham had decidedly improved; there was a pervading suavity and amenity, a studious consideration for the feelings of others, which in former days he had never evinced; even to me he was now sedulously polite. The education of the world, the school of life, had, as far as might be judged from outward circumstances, greatly benefited him.

Once only during the evening had Viola evinced any agitation; and that was when, in answer to a question addressed to him by Mrs. Sidney, as to the cause of his long absence from town, Mr. Lyndham said that he had been summoned on legal business by an old friend who had lately succeeded, in right of his mother, to a magnificent estate in the south. There was a tremor on Viola's lip as she asked, "Is Lady Sarah then dead?"

"She is," replied Mr. Lyndham hurriedly; and he quickly changed the conversation. Viola was evi-

deeply not aware that she had followed the train of her own thoughts rather than of Mr. Lyndham's words, when she thus divined that he was alluding to Turretcliff and its inhabitants; but with this solitary exception, Viola had never, even for one moment, lost her self-possession.

Midnight came, and found me musing. At length I resolved upon retiring to rest; as I passed Viola's apartment, I was surprised to find, from the light that gleamed beneath the doorway, that she at least was wakeful as myself. I paused one moment, and I distinctly heard her pacing the room with hurried and uneven step; I thought too that I distinguished a faint sob. Agitated as I was, I paused not to consider, but hastily threw open the door. In the centre of the room stood Viola, an open letter was in her hand, whilst the fragments of another lay strewn about the floor; she was in the act of trampling a withered flower beneath her feet; a small casket was on the table near her; *I had seen that casket before.*

"What do you here, cousin Dorothy," she exclaimed; "why are you not in bed? if you have any thing to say, speak it quickly. I would be alone."

Her sweet, silvery-toned voice was harsh and untuneful, its accents grated on my ear. There was an unnatural fire in her eye, and a fierce excitement in her manner which scared me. It was the first time she had ever spoken unkindly to me: it was the first time she had made me feel my presence might be deemed intrusive, and bursting into tears I turned to leave the apartment.

"Forgive me, Dorothy," she said; "forgive me if unintentionally I have pained you; but there *are* sorrows which we would veil from every eye, which we would fain conceal even from ourselves; there are griefs for which friendship has no balm—affection no solace. Then leave me, oh, leave me. It is over, Dorothy, it is past; fool, fool that I have been! That

look, that one look, what did it not reveal? Hopes fondly cherished, which had burned brightly through that long series of years; a love which neither time, nor doubt, nor absence, had had the power one moment to estrange; all, all vanished before that withering, blighting look."

Unable longer to restrain my indignation, I exclaimed, "Falsehearted, dishonourable——"

"No, no, no," said Viola, interrupting me, "I have only myself to blame. What right had I to expect that it should be otherwise? He has broken no engagement. By no vows of constancy did he bind himself at parting; no protestations of unchanging affection did he offer; we separated mutually free and unfettered. He returns after nearly fifteen years' absence; he finds me altered, my bloom faded, my youth fled; fled too is that joyous spirit which once had power to charm him. He silently acknowledges that his feelings towards me are changed even as I am changed. There is nothing dishonourable in this. But never shall he know my folly, for well shall my woman's pride combat my woman's love." She sank her head upon the table, and we were silent for many minutes; then suddenly throwing herself before me, she said, "Cousin Dorothy, faithfully have you kept my secret during a weary course of years: you will not now, I think, betray me; yet promise me that, whatever strange chances may befal, whatever unforeseen events may occur,—that, in short, let what will betide, it shall never escape your lips that once I was beloved by Lyndham, that he was—that he, alas! is—all in all to me.'

I thought that she must be under the influence of delirium, or how could she imagine that if, after having for so long a period religiously kept the trust reposed in me, at a time, too, when I believed her love to be reciprocated, I should now, when I saw her crushed to the earth, when I knew her to be virtually rejected,

basely betray the confidence she had placed in me? Grieved and offended, I answered, "You might have spared me this, Viola; you at least should have known me better; but since you thus doubt my truth, it is possible that my bare promise may scarcely content you; bind me, therefore, by any oath you may please to name,—I will subscribe to it."

"I adjure you, then," said Viola, "by the sacred memory of your mother."

The intensity of despair had given a wild sublimity to her manner, and a tone of lofty command to her voice; she looked as must have looked a prophetess of old at the moment of inspiration.

"A more solemn adjuration, Viola, you could not have chosen, but I accept it."

"And now," she said, relapsing into her usual calm, self-possessed manner, "here perishes the last memento of my folly;" as she spoke she held over the candle a letter, which at one glance I recognised to be the same she had received from Mr. Lyndham a few days before his departure. The flame caught it, and quickly it was consumed; she gazed fixedly on it until it was reduced to ashes, and then turning to me, said, "Good night!" she put her hand within mine, it was icy cold, and shot a sudden chill even to the very marrow of my bones. I seem to feel that touch now.

"Good night," she said; "you have seen me, Dorothy, in my hour of weakness, but it is for ever passed. I am purposed that to-morrow shall find me strong to endure, and resolute to act."

I left her,—to weep, to watch, to pray, to meditate, to—anything but sleep.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—O! and is all forgot!

SHAKSPEARE.

However we do praise ourselves,
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,
Than women's are." SHAKSPEARE.

I DARE not trust myself to particularize the occurrences of the next few months. Suffice it then to say, that soon, too soon, I perceived, wherefore Viola had so earnestly extorted from me that promise of secresy. Her naturally quick perception, sharpened as it was by her peculiar situation (for what so quick to discern, or sensitive to feel, as slighted love), had enabled her with "prophetic eye," to foresee that which I only perceived after the lapse of many weeks.

There was much in the guileless simplicity and feminine softness of Lucy's character, which bore a strong analogy to the poet's exquisite delineation of Miranda; and not more pure, more devoted, and scarcely more sudden was the love which the fair Milanese conceived for Ferdinand, than that which Lucy soon betrayed for Lyndham. So strictly secluded indeed had been her life since the days of her childhood, that she might almost have said with Miranda,

"This is the third man that e'er I saw;" and truly could she have averred, "the first that e'er I sighed for."

To one of Mr. Lyndham's haughty and imperious disposition, few things could have been more attractive than Lucy's devoted tenderness, which spoke in her eyes, and betrayed itself in every word she uttered. There was a deference to his opinions, a rapt attention to his discourse, a trembling susceptibility to his praise, and an almost tearful deprecation of his displeasure, which could not fail to captivate, nor less perhaps did her girlish beauty win on him who was an avowed idolater of feminine loveliness. Still even to Mr. Lyndham, I would not willingly be unjust; and certain it is, that no sooner did he perceive the interest he had excited in Lucy's young and inexperienced heart, than he made a faint effort to detach himself from the fascinations of her society. But no sooner did Mrs. Sidney perceive that Mr. Lyndham discontinued his daily visits, than she literally besieged him with notes of invitation and expostulation; even Mr. Sidney, with unwonted exertion, joined his entreaties to those of his wife. And let it be remembered that it was no longer the heartless ambition of worldly-minded parents striving with unbecoming eagerness to separate themselves from a beloved child, and permitting her to leave the "heaven serene and pure of parents' smiles," for a more brilliant, yet perchance far less happy home; but it was the anxious struggles of those who were anticipating, with heartfelt anguish, a period when their tenderly nurtured daughter should be dependent on the precarious aid and niggard charity of kinsmen and friends; it was the pardonable, the natural efforts of those who were seeking an asylum, a refuge for their child, I might say their children, since Mrs. Sidney frequently observed to me, that if "Lucy did but marry Lyndham, there would be a permanent and happy home secured for Viola."

Mr. Lyndham was not proof against Lucy's tearful eyes, or her mother's flattering persuasions, and once again he became a constant visitor at our house. His conduct was now marked by the wildest caprice; at one moment he would appear devoted to Lucy, reading her every thought, anticipating her every wish; the next, he would turn from her with an impulsive gesture, and meet her pleading eye with cold repulsive looks.

In the mean time Viola acted as none other but Viola Sidney *could* have acted. There was no pique or studied avoidance in her manner, no feminine caprice, no bursts of reckless gaiety or ill-suppressed jealousy; she was calm, self-possessed, consistent. Only, I observed, that she carefully avoided being, for one instant, alone with Lucy; she shrunk from the confidence which the latter seemed at each moment ready to repose in her. Poor Lucy had now, for the first time, to suffer in silence; and little was she calculated to bear up against the twofold trial of Mr. Lyndham's wayward inconsistency and Viola's mysterious estrangement,—for such, of course, it must have appeared to her. At length, Lucy's health sank beneath the trial; she fell ill—seriously ill—and then it was that love, jealousy, self, all was forgotten by Viola,—all, save that her gentle, guileless, inoffending sister might be lost to her through her own harsh neglect; for, with morbid anxiety, she accused herself of being the sole cause of Lucy's illness.

Some weeks passed away—Lucy remained languid and spiritless, but all danger was over; still she could not be prevailed upon to leave her apartment; Viola and I were, therefore, sitting with her one morning. Lucy lay upon the couch, her eyes were closed, but her frequent sighs, her restless movements, and the tears that were chasing each other down her cheeks, all betokened that she was not sleeping. Viola sat at some little distance; a book was in her hand, but I

observed that her eyes constantly wandered from its pages, and were as constantly fixed upon Lucy, with a look of mingled love and anxiety. At length she rose abruptly from her chair, and, placing herself next to her sister, said, "Lucy, we have been too long estranged. Have you forgotten the time when we were twins in heart, and mind, and deed; when each thought of thine found its responsive echo in my breast, when joy would have been unwelcome to thee if unshared by me, when sorrow lost its sting whilst I was near to suffer with you? Dear Lucy, let us live o'er those happy hours once again."

"My own sister," replied Lucy, "how my heart leaps to hear those fond, endearing words—to feel your arms about my neck;—oh, keep them there one minute longer. You know not how this unnatural restraint has galled me; how I have longed to kiss thee *thus* and *thus*, to throw myself into your arms, and weep as now I do;" and then, in a burst of uncontrollable agony, the long dreaded confidence was forced upon Viola. With girlish minuteness, she dwelt upon each word, expatiated on every gesture, and lingered over every recollection that was connected with Mr. Lyndham. That he loved her, she said, she could not doubt; but that he had hinted duty and inclination were waging strange conflict in his heart; she believed that he considered himself bound by some early promise—bound in honour to one whom he had ceased to love. "You weep, Viola," said the agitated girl, in conclusion; "you weep for me; you have marked his altered manner, his cold abstracted air: oh! had he ever gazed on you as he has gazed on me—had he ever spoken to you as he has spoken to me, you would not marvel at the deep, devoted love I bear him."

As she finished speaking, Lucy threw herself back upon the couch in all the abandonment of effortless, self-commiserating sorrow.

Viola covered her face with her hands, and, for a few moments, seemed to quail beneath that fearful mental struggle, the conflict of the better nature against the worst; at length she rose from the sofa, and, taking her sister's hand, said, "I think, Lucy, by making a very slight effort, you would be enabled to join us at dinner to-day; I am sure that my father misses you; he does not speak, but he looks round the table, and is evidently grieved at finding your chair unoccupied; and you well know how my mother frets over your continued absence; besides, Mr. Lyndham dines with us to-day, and——"

"Wherefore should I see him, Viola?" interrupted Lucy, with a slight degree of petulance foreign to her character; "wherefore, but to make me, if possible, more wretched than I am now?"

"Nay, dear Lucy, do not ask me why; will it not content you, if I say that I am convinced it will be for your future happiness?"

"Well," rejoined Lucy, affectionately, "if you advise it, I will do so. You are always right, Viola: who is there so wise and good as you? But yet, if Mr. Lyndham should speak unkindly to me, I am sure I could not bear it; it would break my heart."

"Dear Lucy," replied Viola, "credit me that those hearts which are ductile to receive impressions, and strong to retain them, will, like most malleable things, bear much rough usage ere they do break." She spoke this slowly and sadly; but immediately added, in a tone of forced gaiety, "Now I will leave you to repose awhile, and cousin Dorothy shall accompany me, for she is of so sociable a temperament, that she, I know, would weep with you, were it only for the sake of bearing you company: see," she continued as the scalding tears now fell thick and fast down my cheeks, "see if the sympathetic drops have not already begun to flow. Dear Dorothy," she whispered, "this will never do;" and taking my hand Viola led me from the apartment.

Two or three hours after the conversation above related, having occasion to enter the general sitting-room, I found it occupied by Mr. Lyndham and Viola. He was leaning against the mantel-piece; his brow was knitted, his lips compressed, every muscle and lineament seemed tutored into a state of rigid composure. Viola sat at some little distance; the expression of her countenance was one of lofty tranquillity, save that a slight curl of the nether lip betokened that there lurked a feeling of proud disdain beneath that calm demeanour; on perceiving me, she rose from the chair, whilst Mr. Lyndham said, "Is this your final determination, Miss Sidney?"

"It is the settled purpose of my soul," replied Viola, firmly; "fixed beyond the power of change." After a moment's pause, she added, "You said well, Mr. Lyndham; it were, indeed, vain to expect that the fair buds of promise which gladdened our spring, should reblossom in the autumn of our lives. I understand you; I have long understood you: ours would not now be a happy union; you feel it—I know it. I had hoped to have been spared this explanation: I thought that my conduct would have interpreted for me; but ——" she was interrupted, for Lucy entered at this moment, leaning on, or rather clinging to her mother. Slight, very slight, must have been the burden of that exquisitely moulded, yet somewhat fragile form; but, strange to say, Mrs. Sidney appeared to totter beneath it, and withdrew her supporting arm so suddenly, that Lucy lost her balance, and would inevitably have fallen to the ground, had not Mr. Lyndham sprung across the room, and received her in his arms. For a few minutes I was occupied in soothing and attending on Lucy, as, overcome by conflicting emotions, she appeared, each instant, on the point of fainting; and when, at length, I turned to speak to Viola, I found that she had quitted the apartment.

And now why should I say more? It cannot be doubted that Mr. Lyndham proposed that very evening, still less can it be doubted that Lucy joyfully accepted him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

She would not embitter a festival-day,
Nor send her sweet sister in sadness away:
She hears the bells ringing—she sees her depart,
She cannot veil longer the grief of her heart.

HAYNES BAYLEY.

In sooth I cannot smile, and will not weep to-day.

W. H. BROOKFIELD.

WE stood around the altar. The book was closed—the prayer was prayed—the marriage ceremony was over, and the bride-wife, weeping, blushing, trembling, threw herself into the bride-maid's arms. Long—long and fervent was the parting embrace of the two sisters; and when, at length, Viola disengaged herself from Lucy's encircling arms, she turned to Mr. Lyndham, and, extending her hand said, "*Heaven for ever bless you!*" That tone, those words, that attitude, what did they not recall? Time, distance, space, seemed at once annihilated. Again I stood in that familiar room; again I saw the mid-day sun pouring his mellowed rays on all around; again I heard that pale girl, as I heard her then, with voice of agony pronouncing that same parting benediction on him, of whom she fondly believed that, 'mid earth's countless myriads, there could not be found his peer.

What magic spell was there in those words, that on hearing them Mr. Lyndham should start so violently? Why did his cheek flush, and his voice falter, as he said, "Farewell?" Why were there legible on his

dark brow the workings of some inward conflict? Perhaps remorse was there, perhaps shame, perhaps visions of youth, and love, and beauty (such beauty as he might never hope to see again,) rose before his eyes in all the vivid colouring of bygone years. Well, perhaps, it was for Lucy, that she could not read Mr. Lyndham's thoughts at that moment;—well, perhaps, is it for many a young wife, that she may not read her husband's heart at the very moment when the irrevocable vow has been pronounced, that binds him to her for ever!

How long I stood absorbed in these ruminations I know not; but I was roused from my reverie on hearing Mrs. Sidney say, "Come, Dorothy, since Charles has taken the absurd whim into his head, that Lucy and Lyndham should set off from the church-door, we will, at least, see them to the very last moment; besides," she whispered, "I want to look at the travelling-carriage."

Mechanically I followed Mrs. Sidney. I have an indistinct recollection of the plain, dark chariot, of the servants, and postilions, so gay and "point device in their accoutrements," of the four greys (Mr. Lyndham's own greys) pawing the ground with impatience. I remember Mrs. Sidney's beaming April countenance, as, smiling through her tears, she said, "Well, Dorothy, even Lord Glenalbert could not have gone off in better style than this!" I remember, too, Lucy throwing her arms about my neck, and bounding into the carriage, followed by Mr. Lyndham.—In another moment a cloud of dust concealed them from our view.

Margaret's carriage then drew up, and was followed by our own humbler vehicle. My foot was on the steps, when I suddenly exclaimed, "Where is Viola?"

"Ah, where is Viola?" was echoed by the rest of the party.

Tumultuously we rushed back into the church. A

stranger, who was loitering in the aisle, perceiving our anxiety, said, "The lady is ill; she has been carried into the vestry." Thither I hastened; and there, pale and motionless as the marble, lay extended the form of Viola Sidney. I raised her in my arms, and, chafing her hands and temples, whispered, "Viola, dearest, you have borne up well; you surely will not now give way." She seemed to recognise my voice, for, raising herself from my arms, she said, "Take me home——."

Supported by Mr. Middleton and myself, Viola now walked down the aisle, whilst Mrs. Sidney and Margaret followed close behind us; and I distinctly heard the former say, "How strange is this: I never knew Viola faint but once before in her life, and that was on that disastrous evening when Lord Glenalbert went away; but you, Margaret, were too young at the time, to remember anything about it; however, cousin Dorothy will tell you all——."

Here the MS. breaks off abruptly. The last two or three pages are so blotted and blurred as to be almost illegible. The handwriting is tremulous, as of one suffering from severe bodily indisposition, or mental agitation.—ED.

THE END.

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